GOD IN ALL THINGS:

AN ECOFEMINIST TRANSPOSITION OF THE IGNATIAN SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

A Practical Research Project

Presented to

the Faculty of

Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

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Abstract

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The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* is a handbook of prayer developed by Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th Century based on his own spiritual experience. The *Exercises* are primarily intended to be offered by spiritual directors in one of several retreat formats. These include an approximately nine-month retreat, referred to as a "19th Annotation" retreat in daily life. On the one hand, Ignatius' combination of deep internal work, imaginative and direct engagement with the Divine, and a call to action, feels startlingly modern. On the other, Ignatius' 16th century Roman Catholic patriarchal, androcentric, and anthropocentric theology and worldview permeate the *Spiritual Exercises* in ways that can be a barrier to contemporary retreatants, particularly women.

Adaptation of the *Spiritual Exercises* to meet the needs of retreatants is a core principle of Ignatius' *Exercises*. Traditionally, that has primarily meant making adaptations for a given individual retreatant. In more recent years, however, several writers have created more global adaptations for several purposes, including using different theological and cultural lenses. This project seeks to make such an adaptation using an ecofeminist lens, addressing the androcentric and anthropocentric aspects of the *Spiritual Exercises* to make the *Exercises* more accessible and relevant to those living in today's world.

In this project, twelve basic ecofeminist principles were distilled from a survey of writers working at the intersection of feminism, ecology, and theology or spirituality. Those principles guided the creation of a resource for a thirty-eight-week version of a 19th Annotation retreat. These adapted Exercises were field tested using eight volunteer subjects, four meeting for one-

on-one spiritual direction and four meeting in a spiritual direction group. The directory resource created in this project can be used by spiritual directors who wish to offer the *Spiritual Exercises* to retreatants who would benefit from this contemporary ecofeminist approach.

DEDICATION

With profound gratitude
to the ancestors, foremothers, and wisdom teachers
on whose shoulders I stand;
to the women who served as my focus group retreatants,
for their insight, courage, and constancy;
and to Mother Earth,
She who has given me life and continues to give daily.

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Introduction

God in All Things

What if beginning—
this beginning, any beginning, The Beginning—
does not lie back, like an origin,
but rather opens out?
— Catherine Keller[1]

The *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, a handbook of prayer practices crafted by self-described "pilgrim," Ignatius of Loyola, in the 16th Century, have been transformational for countless other pilgrims for centuries. Ignatius developed his exercises, which he described as "exercises for the soul," from his own spiritual experience.[2] The aim of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to "enable, facilitate, or prepare the ground for an encounter with God."[3] Through the *Spiritual Exercises*,[4] a person is led towards greater spiritual freedom, "gradually bringing an order of value" to their lives.[5] Ignatius hoped that after making the *Spiritual Exercises* an individual would have a deeper and more loving relationship with God, so that they would be inspired to embody that love for others in the world. Ignatius would have approved of activist Grace Lee Boggs' admonition to "'transform yourself to transform the world.'"[6]

Today the *Spiritual Exercises* are being offered to a broader range of individuals than at any time in its history. However, they are still primarily known and used in the Roman Catholic

[1] Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003), "Pre/Face," Kindle.

[2] Louis J. Puhl, trans., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2021), ix.

[3] Erin M. Cline, *A World on Fire: Sharing the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises with Other Religions* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), chap. 1, Kindle.

[4] In an effort to clarify whether I am speaking of Ignatius' original *Spiritual Exercises* or the adapted version created in this project, I will use italics except when referring to my adapted Exercises.

[5] David L. Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading of The Spiritual Exercises* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 23.

[6] Grace Lee Boggs, quoted by adrienne maree brown in *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017), 2.

context. I am a white female progressive Protestant pastor, ordained in the United Church of Christ, and a certified spiritual director. In my spiritual direction formation, I was introduced only briefly to the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*. The program I completed in 2011 was affiliated with the Episcopal Church and was very ecumenical and interspiritual in focus. As with most formation programs outside the Roman Catholic context, we received no training in offering the *Spiritual Exercises*, so I had minimal experience or understanding of them.

Then several years ago, I began to work with a spiritual director and supervisor who was an ordained Presbyterian minister but whose spiritual direction formation was thoroughly Ignatian. After working together for a while, she offered to lead me through an Ignatian 19th Annotation retreat, the *Spiritual Exercises* in daily living (also called the "Extended Ignatian Exercises").[7] My director also suggested *The Ignatian Adventure*, by Kevin O'Brien, SJ, as a resource for the retreat, which took a little more than nine months. Some of the Catholic terminology required "translation" by my director, and at times Ignatius' 16th Century patriarchal worldview and theology showed through in ways that were unhelpful at best. Even with those stumbling blocks, however, it was a rich, powerful, I would even say transformative experience.

I was amazed that I had not known more about this method for deep spiritual exploration. In discussion with others in the spiritual direction community, I learned I was not alone in my ignorance. I found that relatively few spiritual directors outside the Catholic tradition knew anything about the *Spiritual Exercises*. I was determined to obtain training to allow me to offer

[7] Ignatius numbered the paragraphs of his *Spiritual Exercises* manuscript. Each of these numbered paragraphs is referred to as an "annotation." Citations to Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* often use the abbreviation "SE" followed by the annotation number, and those citations will usually be placed in the text. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* will be from the Ganss translation. George E. Ganss, trans., *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1992).

the *Spiritual Exercises* to my own directees and completed a program for that purpose designed for those who were already spiritual directors. I then began to lead others in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

I continued to be intrigued by the *Spiritual Exercises* and felt inspired to make the retreat again, but to come to it from a different perspective. At my director's suggestion, we used *The New Spiritual Exercises: In the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* by Louis M. Savary, SJ, and *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* by Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, and Elizabeth Liebert, as guides for the retreat. I found both approaches helpful but disappointingly limited in significant ways that collided with my own lived experience.

Savary incorporated the work of Teilhard de Chardin into the *Spiritual Exercises*. He reviewed Teilhard's notes from when, as a faithful Jesuit himself, Teilhard annually made the retreat. Teilhard's notes for the *Exercises* "hinted at a growing need for their '*transposition*,'" a word meaning to transfer something from one place or context to another. In music, for example, a piece of music can be transposed from one key to a different key; the essence of the composition remains the same but the expression of it is different. Savary wanted to transpose the *Spiritual Exercises* into a 21st Century key, as Teilhard might have done had he still been alive.[8]

Unfortunately, while incorporating a more modern scientific understanding and ecological insight, Savary's work maintains both a patriarchal male-centered (androcentric) and human-centered (anthropocentric) perspective. Not surprisingly, as the work reflected the experience of three men, the lived experience of women is not considered at all. Moreover, while

[8] Louis M. Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises: In the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (New York Paulist Press, 2010), ix, 14.

the retreatant is encouraged to love all creation, as God loves it, the natural world is still conceived of as something separate from humanity.[9]

Dyckman, Garvin, and Liebert, three Catholic women religious, critiqued the *Spiritual Exercises* using a feminist hermeneutic. This was ground-breaking work, and provided important feminine context, but their perspective was narrowly limited to the experience of women religious which did not reflect my experience.[10] In addition, the work of both Savary and Dyckman, et al, were grounded in Catholic theology, which was often either foreign or did not speak to me, and neither addressed the human connection to the natural world in which we live and which is central to my own theology and spirituality. I came to feel very strongly that another "transposition" was needed, to a different key.

An important aspect of the *Spiritual Exercises* is discerning God's call in the retreatant's life at that time. As I progressed through the *Spiritual Exercises* for the second time, I felt deeply called to concretely address my struggles with the *Spiritual Exercises* as a woman, as a Protestant with a progressive theology heavily influenced by ecofeminism, and as a human living in a time of deepening climate crisis. This project, to adapt the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* from an ecofeminist perspective, grew out of that discernment. In this project I surveyed a broad constellation of ecofeminist thought, distilled principles that I could use as a lens through which to approach adaptation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, created a resource of thirty-eight weeks of

[9] Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises*, xii.

[10] A second edition of this directory was published in 2022, with only Elizabeth Liebert from the original authors involved, along with South African scholar Annmarie Paulin-Campbell. The primary change in the second edition was the addition of the perspective of South African women. However, that did not address most of my own issues with this otherwise very useful resource. Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women*, 2nd ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 2022).

exercises that can be used by spiritual directors to offer an adapted 19th Annotation extended Ignatian retreat in daily life, and field tested that resource.[11]

The field test of this project included eight volunteer subjects as a focus group who made the 19th Annotation retreat using my adapted Exercises resource at no cost; four met for one-on-one spiritual direction and four met in a spiritual direction group. By design, all participants were spiritual directors, so that they could also provide feedback on the resource itself from the perspective of one who might give the retreat to others. Although I had originally intended to limit participants to those who self-identified as progressive Protestants, two of the eight retreatants identified as progressive Catholics, which provided another valuable perspective. All were particularly interested in the ecofeminist lens I was using for these Exercises. In addition, though not by design, all the focus group retreatants were women.

Per the IRB-approved research protocol,[12] I had an initial meeting with each retreatant to explain the project and each signed a consent form. In addition, in our first meeting I asked interview questions to understand how they viewed their spirituality before starting the retreat itself. I then led them through the thirty-eight weeks of adapted *Spiritual Exercises*. Data collected from this field test included information from pre- and post-retreat interviews and questionnaires and my field notes from the spiritual direction sessions. Confidentiality was maintained, using pseudonyms on all data, which was maintained in a password protected file on my computer. The results of my analysis of data from this field test are described in Chapter 5.

[11] A description of the adaptations is included in Chapter 4. The collected adapted Spiritual Exercises are attached as Appendix A.

[12] My research protocol was submitted to the IRB, number 2022-1101, and the exemption was granted on November 7, 2022. A copy of the protocol is included as Appendix E. All volunteer retreatants signed releases, per IRB protocol. The protocol called for a minimum of 2 volunteer participants.

I am passionate about this project because I have experienced the transformative power of the *Spiritual Exercises* both for myself and for my directees. I have seen how it can help people develop and deepen in self-knowledge and relationship with God. I also believe that the *Spiritual Exercises* have great potential to form leaders who will go into their contexts and work for change, change that is desperately needed. I want to help make the *Spiritual Exercises* more broadly known, accessible, and relevant for today's seekers after the Divine.

In my experience, many people today are spiritually hungry, and yet are leaving or have left organized institutional religion, instead connecting with God in nature. Even those who stay within the Church complain that it is not meeting their spiritual needs. Spiritual direction with the *Spiritual Exercises* provides both the structure and the space for deep spiritual exploration that I believe is ideally suited to our times. With its balance of deep internal work, imaginative and direct engagement with the Divine, and a call to action, Ignatius' approach feels startlingly modern. "The genius and beauty of the *Exercises* is that we learn to weave our own life narrative into the life story of Jesus Christ in such a way that both become more vivid and interconnected."[13]

However, the experience of the *Spiritual Exercises* also needs to reflect the reality of life in this century. We live in a world shaped by an androcentric and anthropocentric worldview and theology which the Christian church has played a major role in promoting. This has led to massive gender, racial, and income inequality and an ongoing climate crisis that threatens all life on this planet. To the extent aspects of the *Spiritual Exercises* perpetuate those issues, it will have limited appeal to contemporary spiritual seekers. Further, while they are not doctrinal *per*

[13] Kevin F. O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011), 4.

se, offering instead an experience of the Divine largely through direct engagement with scripture, patriarchal Roman Catholic doctrine undergirds important elements of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

I know from my own experience that when the 16th century language and theology in Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* clash with 21st century lived experience, theology, and worldview, it can distract and detract from the retreatant's ability to engage in the *Spiritual Exercises* as intended. These elements also make it harder for spiritual directors offering the *Spiritual Exercises*, as they must constantly translate aspects of the *Exercises* for their retreatants. This is especially true for contemporary women who do not come from a Roman Catholic background, and for any retreatants whose spirituality is connected to the natural environment.

The goal of this project was not to change the basic framework or dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises*, but to change its operative theology and epistemology, and to update its approach and language. I chose an ecofeminist theological and spiritual approach because it centers the lived experience of women and of the more-than-human world, has a broad epistemology, prizes relationship as key to spirituality, and rejects hierarchical dualism. Therefore, it directly addresses issues that can arise for 21st century retreatants with traditional Christianity of any flavor and with the *Spiritual Exercises* in particular. Adapting the *Spiritual Exercises* using ecofeminist theology and spirituality, paired with sweeping away the baked-in assumptions of familiarity with Roman Catholic language and tradition, offers a revisioned Spiritual Exercises for our times.

This project falls within a long tradition of "directories" for the *Spiritual Exercises*, designed to supplement the concise and often cryptic text of Ignatius' original manuscript. Such directories began to circulate late in the 16th Century and have continued to the present day.

Some directories are more like commentaries,[14] others provide specific instructions and resources for the one offering the *Spiritual Exercises*.[15] In addition, there have been numerous translations of Ignatius' manuscript into English with commentary.[16]

Ecofeminist theology weaves in beautifully with Ignatian spirituality and the *Spiritual Exercises*. There are many points of connection, including a focus on relationship as a key aspect of spirituality and the understanding that "God is in all things."[17] Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* were also counter-cultural for their time, emphasizing the use of the retreatant's imagination to provide a direct experience of the Divine. By their very nature and design, Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* made an end run around the institutional church in a way that could resonate with today's spiritual seekers. Ignatius directed women in his *Spiritual Exercises* and trained women to offer the *Spiritual Exercises* to others, thereby honoring women's experience of the Divine.[18] His *Spiritual Exercises* also include an almost shocking, for its time, imaginative contemplation of a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to his mother, Mary, leading the retreatant far outside the bounds of both scripture and church tradition (SE 218-225). Moreover, adaptation for our contemporary religious, spiritual, and cultural context is fully consistent with Ignatius' own approach to the *Spiritual Exercises*, as evidenced by his emphasis on adapting the *Exercises* to

[14] Some examples include: William A. Barry, *Letting God Come Close: An Approach to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: Jesuit Way, 2001); Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*; Roger Haight, *Christian Spirituality for Seekers: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012).

[15] Examples include: Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises*; O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*; Joseph A. Tetlow, *Choosing Christ in the World: A Handbook for Directing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola According to Annotations Eighteen and Nineteen* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1999).

[16] Examples include: Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises*; Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship*; Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*.

[17] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 3, 7, 75.

[18] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed,* 19-38.

the needs of retreatants, and by the other directors who have adapted the *Spiritual Exercises* in modern times in a variety of ways.[19]

Lastly, I feel some urgency for this project. Our world is in crisis in many ways. When Ignatius sent the early Jesuits out to "set the world on fire," these were not the kind of fires he had in mind. To meet the myriad challenges facing our world (all of which have their genesis in and continue to be sustained by patriarchal, androcentric, and anthropocentric systems, institutions, and practices), we need to radically change hearts and minds. Humans need new understandings of what it means to be human, and of the human relationship to God and the more-than-human world. I believe what our world is facing is fundamentally a spiritual crisis,[20] and what is needed is a spiritual transformation. I believe that new and revisioned spiritual practices will play an important role in bringing about such transformation. I hope that these adapted Spiritual Exercises can contribute to that.

[19] Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises*, xi. Other examples include the following: Haight, *Christian Spirituality for Seekers*; Ruben L. F. Habito, *Zen and the Spiritual Exercises*, 25th Anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013); Patrick Saint-Jean, *The Spiritual Work of Racial Justice: A Month of Meditations with Ignatius of Loyola* (Vestal, NY: Anamchara Books, 2021), Kindle; Neil Vaney, *Christ in a Grain of Sand: An Ecological Journey with the Spiritual Exercises* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2004); James L. Wakefield, *Sacred Listening: Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006); Larry Warner, *Journey with Jesus: Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2010), ProQuest Ebook Central.

[20] As does Mary Grey and others. Mary C. Grey, *Sacred Longings: The Ecological Spirit and Global Culture* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), Kindle.

Chapter 1

Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises

Reflecting on his life,
Ignatius referred to himself as a pilgrim.
Contemporary statues of Ignatius
fittingly depict him as a man in motion
With a long walking stick firmly in hand,
And one foot raised, stepping forward.
— Kevin O'Brien, SJ[1]

The *Spiritual Exercises* emerged from the experience of Ignatius of Loyola. Therefore, before we can talk about how this project adapted the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, we must understand the history and nature of the *Spiritual Exercises* themselves. In this chapter I will describe the *Spiritual Exercises* and their genesis in the life and spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola. I then discuss how the worldview and theology within which Ignatius crafted his *Exercises* finds expression within the *Exercises* and poses challenges for those offering and making the retreat in a contemporary context, particularly women and those outside the Roman Catholic tradition.

What Are the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises?

The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* are a handbook of prayer developed by Ignatius of Loyola based on his own spiritual experience and his 16th century Roman Catholic understanding.[2] This handbook provides an intentional series of exercises based on the life of Jesus. These include unique exercises crafted by Ignatius, many of which involve what Ignatius called "meditations," which are exercises of the rational mind, as well as exercises that use imagination to enter into stories from the gospel texts, called "contemplations." Ignatius referred to all of these as "spiritual exercises" because of his "belief that, like the body, the human spirit

[1]Kevin O'Brien, *Seeing with the Heart: A Guide to Navigating Life's Adventures* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2023), 5, Kindle.

[2] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, ix.

requires exercise in order to stay healthy (SE 1)."[3] Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* also express "a spirituality that is grounded in following Christ. They offer a way of learning to recognize God's ongoing presence and discerning God's call in one's life and work, of deepening one's relationship with God and making decisions based on that relationship (SE 21)."[4] A retreatant, one who "makes" the *Spiritual Exercises,* is led by a person who "offers" or "gives" the *Spiritual Exercises*, *i.e.* a spiritual director, towards greater spiritual freedom and a deeper and more intimate relationship with God.

Ignatius did not invent the various forms of prayer described in his *Spiritual Exercises*, however the way he put them together was innovative, unique, and effective. Yet the *Spiritual Exercises* were not intended as a tool for conversion to Christianity, "they were clearly designed for Catholics already grounded in their faith."[5] Instead, Ignatius intended that his *Spiritual Exercises* would facilitate a "conversion of the heart, conceived as both a 'turning to' and a 'turning from.'"[6] In Ignatian terms, "turning to" means "seeking and finding the will of God," and "turning from" refers to "the process of getting free from the influence of 'disordered' drives and attachments that stifle love" and prevent one from living as God intended.[7]

Rather than reading the *Spiritual Exercises* and following along with the exercises on one's own, Ignatius' handbook provides notes intended for spiritual directors who offer a "retreat" using the guidelines in the book.[8] The aim of the retreat is spiritual experience, not religious study.[9]

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[3] Cline, *A World on Fire*, Introduction.
[4] Cline, *A World on Fire*, Introduction.
[5] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 1.
[6] Cline, *A World on Fire,* chap. 1.
[7] Michael Ivens and Ignatius, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary: A Handbook for Retreat Directors*, New ed. (Leominster, England: Gracewing, 2016), 1-2.
[8] Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 4,
[9] Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, *vii.*

Ignatius allowed for great flexibility in how a retreat is offered including, but not limited to, a one-month one-on-one intensive retreat in seclusion (SE 20), an approximately nine-month "retreat in daily life" (SE 19), or a shorter week-long or weekend retreat drawing on different parts of the *Exercises* (SE 18). The retreat can be given to individuals in a one-to-one setting or in groups.[10]

During the retreat, the director offers daily prayer exercises and meets with retreatants regularly for spiritual direction sessions. In one-on-one, individually directed retreats, the daily exercises are usually tailored to the needs of the individual retreatant, so that no two individual retreats are exactly the same. Further, as Cline notes, "no two spiritual directors give the *Exercises* in exactly the same way, and no two directors would be likely to make precisely the same adaptations for any one individual."[11] In the direction sessions, the fruits of retreatants' prayer are discussed and both director and retreatant listen for how the Spirit is working through the *Spiritual Exercises* and through the text of their lives. The director also listens for emotional and spiritual signposts and discerns what exercises to offer next to help the retreatants progress through the dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Ignatius divided the retreat into four phases, which are called "Weeks" – with a capital "W." This can be confusing, because even in the one-month 20th Annotation retreat format the Weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises* do not correspond to four calendar weeks. The First Week invites the retreatant into reflection on the experience of God's love, even in the midst of human sin. The Second Week leads the retreatant through the life of Jesus until the beginning of the Passion narrative. The Third Week follows Jesus in his last days until his death on the cross. The

[10] Cline provides an excellent overview of the many different ways the *Exercises* have been given. Cline, *A World on Fire,* chap. 1.

[11] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 1.

Fourth Week begins with the stories of Jesus' resurrection and post-resurrection appearances to his disciples and invites the retreatant to discern how their experience in the retreat is calling them to make God's love manifest in the world. In addition, in modern times directors offering the retreat have adopted the practice of offering several weeks of preparatory exercises prior to beginning the First Week.

The flow through the retreat is not linear, even though from the Second Week on the retreatant moves through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus from his conception. Instead, there is more of a spiral movement in the retreat;[12] themes are introduced, then revisited and explored in different ways. Significant and interconnected themes or ideas explored in the *Spiritual Exercises* include the following: God in all things, spiritual freedom, the spiritual importance of our emotions and deepest desires, discernment as a spiritual practice, and imagination as a doorway to the Divine.

1. God in All Things

Foundational to Ignatian spirituality as explored in the *Exercises* is Ignatius' belief in a God of unconditional Love. This is not a static, abstract, or sentimental kind of love, but a love that creates, gifts, and is active in our lives and in our world. In Fleming's words, Ignatius believed that "God is Love loving."[13] As we deepen in our relationship with this God of Love, we are led to actively manifest that Love in the world.

Moreover, "Ignatius believed that we can find God in all things, at every moment, even in the most ordinary times."[14] To develop our ability to find God in all things, Ignatius

[12] Kevin O'Brien, "The Dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises: An Intensive for Spiritual Directors Accompanying Others in the 19th Annotation Retreat" (class lecture, Boston College, Online course, July 15, 2024).

[13] David L. Fleming, *Like the Lightning: The Dynamics of the Ignatian Exercises* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 82.

[14] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 75.

recommended a practice of daily reflection, called the Examen, in which a person looks back over a certain period of time to see the signposts of the Spirit's presence and activity. A retreatant is encouraged to practice the Examen daily throughout the retreat. The Examen is a prayer of memory. "Remembering so permeates Ignatian spirituality that it can be well characterized as a *reflective* spirituality."[15]

2. Spiritual Freedom

Developing spiritual or interior freedom is a key aim of Ignatius' *Exercises* (SE 1, 21). Ignatius used a word for this freedom that is typically translated as "indifference." By that term, he did not mean lack of interest or concern. On the contrary, as Ignatius saw God in all things, we are meant to treat all things, all beings, as gifts of life worthy of our concern.

At the same time, if we hold onto something too tightly, if we are too attached to it, if it has too great an importance in our lives, then it may prevent us from being fully open to God/Spirit. In Ignatian terms, it becomes a "disordered attachment." In biblical language we might call it an "idol"—something that has become more important to us than God or God's call on our life. Disordered attachments are distractions that hook us and pull us off the path we want to walk with God. Gratitude, delight, and the ability or willingness to let something go are some of the signs of this freedom.[16]

3. The Spiritual Importance of our Emotions and Deepest Desires

A major insight of Ignatian spirituality is the important role our emotions and desires play in our relationship with God. Throughout the *Exercises*, particularly in the practice of the Examen, retreatants are encouraged to pay close attention to their "interior movements," the

[15] Fleming, *Like the Lightning*, 30.

[16] Kevin O'Brien, The Dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises: An Intensive for Spiritual Directors Accompanying Others in the 19th Annotation Retreat (class lecture, Boston College, Online course, July 16, 2024).

feelings that are activated within them. A man of his time, "Ignatius believed these interior movements were the result of 'good spirits' and 'evil spirits'"[17] In our era of modern psychology, we might describe their source differently. However we understand them, these interior movements are a source of data about our relationship with the Divine. We feel closer to God in times of what Ignatius called spiritual "consolation" and farther away in times he termed spiritual "desolation." Reflecting over time on our feelings or interior movements helps us to recognize patterns and the direction those feelings may be leading us.

Similarly, Ignatius recommended that retreatants begin times of prayer by asking for what they desire (SE 48, 91). "When we know our deepest desires, we know something important, not only about ourselves but also about God, as our deepest desires come from and point to that same God."[18] Our deepest desires are an indication of God's desire for us.

4. Discernment as a Spiritual Practice

The regular practice of paying attention to interior movements and desires becomes an essential part of Ignatian discernment. Discernment is an important aspect of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Ignatius provided specific guidelines and a collection of rules for discernment, including tools to help retreatants make an "election" – a significant life decision (SE 169-189). However, for those not facing a major life choice, Ignatian discernment tools are still useful as guidelines for any choices made in everyday life.

Discernment is a spiritual practice that places the retreatant's choices in the context of prayer so that their decisions reflect "what better leads to God's deepening life" in them.[19]

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[17] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 115.
[18] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 105.
[19] Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship*, 27.

Spiritual freedom is crucial for discernment. As one grows in spiritual freedom then "at the moment of choice or decision we are not swayed by any disordered love" or attachment.[20]

5. Imagination as a doorway to the Divine

The use of imagination in prayer is a distinguishing feature of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*. While Ignatius did not invent the practice of using imagination in prayer, he emphasized it and trusted what was revealed through its use. After all, if God can be found in all things, God can also be found in our imagination.

Two of the most notable ways imagination is used in the *Exercises* is in Ignatian contemplation and in the practice of colloquy. When Ignatius used the term "contemplation" he specifically meant the use of imagination to place oneself in a scene from the gospels, to become part of the story. Colloquy is an intimate imaginative conversation with Jesus, God the Father, Mary the mother of Jesus, or one of the saints. "Every exercise in the *Spiritual Exercises* is meant to end in a colloquy."[21] It is primarily through these prayer practices that a retreatant develops a more intimate relationship with Jesus, who becomes a friend and mentor through whom the retreatant is led into a deeper relationship to the Divine.

The Genesis of the Spiritual Exercises

Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* cannot really be understood apart from the history of Ignatius himself, including how he came to create and offer the *Exercises* to others. He was born Iñigo de Loyola y Oñaz in 1491 into a family of minor Spanish nobility.[22] Passionate and idealistic at heart, he dreamed of becoming a knight and having daring adventures. His family was able to secure him a position as a page and he left home at the age of sixteen. Though

[20] Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship*, 23.
[21] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell*, The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 96.
[22] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure,* 5.

relatively short in stature, he seems to have had some success at court, "riding, dueling, gambling, dancing, and romancing young ladies."[23]

Ten years later, in 1509, he became a soldier and was stationed in the town of Pamplona. In 1521 the French attacked Pamplona. In that doomed battle he was severely injured when a cannonball struck his legs. He was carried home to Loyola, a two-week journey, where his leg bones were reset (twice), and he almost died from infection.[24]

During the roughly six months of his convalescence, Iñigo "asked for some novels of chivalry to read," but all his caregiver "could find were a popular version of the life of Christ and a collection of tales of saints."[25] As he read, he began to notice a shift in his thoughts and feelings. He described this in his Autobiography (which he wrote in the third person):

> When he thought of worldly matters, he found much delight; but after growing weary and dismissing them, he found that he was dry and unhappy. But when he thought of going barefoot to Jerusalem and eating nothing but herbs and of imitating the saints in all the austerities they practiced, he not only found consolation in these thoughts, but even after they had left him he remained happy and joyful.[26]

Iñigo "became convinced that God was speaking to him through his interior attractions and reactions."[27]

He turned his passion, idealism, and romantic heart in a different direction. Instead of returning to court when he was recovered, Iñigo became "a pilgrim, an itinerant preacher of sorts, who would travel the highways and byways, sharing his insights and engaging in spiritual

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[23] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure,* 5.
[24] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 6.
[25] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 6.
[26] Joseph N. Tylenda and Ignatius, *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of St. Ignatius of Loyola,* rev. ed. (Collegeville, MI: Ignatius Press, 2001), 36, Kindle.
[27] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure, 7.*

conversation with others."[28] He even traded clothes with a beggar to better surrender himself completely to God. He eventually landed in Manresa, where he spent countless hours in solitary prayer and charitable service, sometimes going to extremes of piety that threatened his still fragile health. While at Manresa, Iñigo sought out the advice of an elderly woman known for her spiritual wisdom. One day she said to him, "May it please my Lord Jesus Christ to appear to you some day!"[29] This took him by surprise and he asked, "How would Jesus Christ appear to me?"[30] Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell would say of this nameless woman in Manresa:

> Today this prophetic yet nameless woman hovers on the edge of our contemporary consciousness as a symbol of invisible and forgotten women. When the history and interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises* includes women's perspective, a whole new story emerges from the underside of the Ignatian tradition.[31]

Still in Manresa, where he stayed for several months, Iñigo had his most significant mystical experience while sitting outside and contemplating the Cardonner River. In his autobiography, he would later describe the experience this way:

> The road followed the path of the river, and he was taken up with his devotions; he sat down for a while facing the river flowing far below him. As he sat there the eyes of his understanding were opened, and though he saw no vision, he understood and perceived many things, numerous spiritual things as well as matters touching on faith and learning, and this was with an elucidation so bright that all these things seemed new to him. He cannot expound in detail what he then understood, for there were many things, but he can state that he received such a lucidity in understanding that during the course of his entire life—now having passed his sixty-second year—if he were to gather all the helps he received from God and everything he knew, and add them together, he does not

[28] Mark Mossa, *Saint Ignatius Loyola—The Spiritual Writings: Selections Annotated and Explained* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2012), Introduction, Kindle.

[29] Tylenda and Ignatius, *A Pilgrim's Journey*, 52.

[30] Tylenda and Ignatius, *A Pilgrim's Journey, 52.* Ignatius would again single out this unnamed woman for praise in his autobiography.

[31] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell*, The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 20.

> think they would add up to all that he received on that one occasion.[32]

It was soon after this experience that Iñigo began to make notes of his spiritual experiences, with the intent of sharing them in order to help others. These notes would become his *Spiritual Exercises*. In effect, "he made the *Exercises* before he wrote them."[33] His book of *Spiritual Exercises* was complete, "'at least in substance,'" by the time he left Manresa in 1522.[34]

After some more time as a pilgrim, Iñigo sought formal academic training in Paris, where he became known by the Latin form of his name, Ignatius, and met the first of the compatriots who would form the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), with Ignatius as the head of the order.[35] It was not until 1537 that Ignatius was finally ordained as a priest by the Roman Catholic Church.

Thus, Ignatius first created his *Spiritual Exercises* as a lay person of Roman Catholic faith, outside the Church structure, based on his own spiritual experiences, to help others in their own spiritual journeys. Ignatius and his contemporary Jesuits, whom he trained, used the *Spiritual Exercises* handbook Ignatius created to offer retreats "to many kinds of persons and in many different ways."[36] This included women, who would have been among the first persons to experience the *Exercises*.[37] Indeed, "the presence and participation of strong, intelligent, and passionate women appear throughout Ignatius' life; they come from various classes, nations, and lifestyles, with names and identities, and influenced their culture through a variety of gifts."[38]

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[32] Tylenda and Ignatius, *A Pilgrim's Journey*, 60-61.
[33] Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 3.
[34] Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 3.
[35] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 9-10.
[36] Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 4.
[37] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 3, 26-38; Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 8.
[38] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 5. Unfortunately, that feminine perspective never made it into the text of the *Exercises* themselves.

It is said that when it was printed in 1548, Ignatius kept all five hundred copies of his book of *Spiritual Exercises* and only gave them to those who had made the full retreat themselves, usually under Ignatius' own direction.[39] "Ignatius' concern was that the person who was going to give these *Exercises* to another would have a sense of how to adapt them and so apply them to that individual."[40] Thus, from the beginning, the idea of adaptation was central to the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises.*

Stumbling Blocks for Retreatants Today

It is well recognized that at least "some parts of the *Exercises* reflect Ignatius' own cultural and historical place in ways that stand in tension with modern sensibilities."[41] Consider, for example, the Meditation on the Two Standards (SE 136-148): "The one of Christ, our supreme leader and lord, the other of Lucifer, the deadly enemy of our human nature."[42] This is a core meditation in the *Spiritual Exercises*. The retreatant is instructed to imagine a large battlefield with two opposing armies on either end, the standards (or flags) of their leader flying. The retreatant is then guided in a meditation to discern under which banner they will stand. The key to this meditation is not the answer, which would be obvious for anyone who would choose to make the *Exercises*, but the process. And yet the very dualistic structure of the meditation, the militaristic imagery, and the figure of a personified devil conjures up visions of the battle scenes in Peter Jackson's film adaptations of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. If a retreatant, like me, does not accept the underlying theological assumption that spirituality is a war between good and evil, this imagery does not help them tune into the interior movements that are central to Ignatius' approach to discernment. All of this made total sense to Ignatius, who began his

[39] Fleming, *Like the Lightning*, 11.
[40] Fleming, *Like the Lightning*, 11.
[41] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 2.
[42] Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 49.

career as a soldier. However, many people today would need to completely reframe it before they could even attempt to enter into this meditation. That was my experience. Others I know are simply frustrated and ignore this meditation entirely. This is unfortunate, as this exercise is central to understanding Ignatius' approach to discernment and spiritual leadership.

Similarly, several of Ignatius' meditations assume the existence of a tri-partite world: heaven above, hell below, and earth in the middle. For example, in the First Week there is the meditation on the sin of the angels (SE 50), the meditation on the sin of anyone who has gone to hell (SE 51), and the meditation on hell itself (SE 65-72). Others, such as the Call of the King (SE 91-100), refer to God as our heavenly "King," a problematic term for many because of the patriarchal and hierarchical image of the Divine, among other reasons. "The model of God as king is . . . 'domesticated transcendence,' for a king only rules over human beings."[43] Thus, "the king/realm model is neither genuinely transcendent (God is king over one species recently arrived on a minor planet in an ordinary galaxy) nor genuinely immanent (God as king is an external super person, not the source, power and goal of the entire universe)."[44] As another example, the meditation on the sin of Adam and Eve (SE 51) perpetuates the theological basis for human domination of the earth and the oppression of women.[45]

Most directors and retreatants just ignore or reframe these problematic exercises for themselves, but I know from my own experience that this can take the retreatant out of the experience those exercises were intended to create and sometimes creates tension between the retreatant and her director.[46] The original *Spiritual Exercises* also clearly assume an

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[43] Sallie McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred,* ed. Carol J. Adams (New York: Continuum, 1993), 95.

[44] McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," 95.

[45] A more detailed description of problematic elements of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the ecofeminist critique of them is provided in Chapter 4.

[46] While not in direction with them at the time, I have had Ignatian spiritual directors get frustrated when I have pointed out where the theology of the *Exercises* diverges from Protestant theology. I know others who have

understanding of certain traditions, terminology, or concepts, such as the use of "grace" to mean the fruit of prayer, and the frequent references to the Trinity. This can also prove a barrier for retreatants not versed in Christian, and often specifically Roman Catholic, tradition and practice. In Ignatius' day, an assumption of such familiarity was warranted, but not so today. All of this can, and has, led many to assume that the *Spiritual Exercises* are not for them. Indeed, when I talk about the *Spiritual Exercises*, I have often been asked, "isn't that just a Catholic thing?" No, it is not. However, in today's culture it can no longer be assumed that all who come to the *Spiritual Exercises*, even those who identify as Christians, come with the same theological understanding and knowledge.

had the same experience while making the retreat themselves. Most consider the question of whether the *Exercises* are appropriate to Protestants to be well-settled. Indeed, it appears that in the early Jesuit days (which paralleled the Protestant Reformation) the *Spiritual Exercises* were offered to some Protestants. Cline, *A World on Fire*, Introduction and chap. 1. And yet, most Ignatian directors are not trained in how to make adaptations for non-Catholic Christians, and I found few and incomplete resources to aid in such adaptation.

Chapter 2

Methodology

There is no one model or criterion
for determining what is authentic knowing.
—Ivone Gebara[1]

This chapter addresses three aspects of the methodology of this project: (1) the methodology used to adapt the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* from an ecofeminist lens, (2) the methodology used to research the effectiveness of the adapted Spiritual Exercises, and (3) the methodology used to collate and analyze the data collected. The results of that research will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Adaptation Methodology

In executing an ecofeminist adaptation of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, I was guided by my own experience with the *Exercises* and by the work of Louis Savary, SJ and Erin M. Cline. Savary's *New Spiritual Exercises* applied the work of Teilhard de Chardin, another Jesuit, to the *Spiritual Exercises*.[2] In *A World on Fire*, Cline explored how the *Spiritual Exercises* could be adapted for those from faith traditions other than Christian.[3] Savary's work provided a systematic methodology for applying a specific theological perspective to the *Spiritual Exercises* and testing its effectiveness. Cline, on the other hand, addressed practical considerations so that adaptations remain faithful to Ignatius' original work.

The goal of Savary's work was similar to my own in that he sought to bring the *Spiritual Exercises* forward to incorporate modern scientific, particularly evolutionary, knowledge and understanding. Savary began by distilling seventeen basic principles of Teilhardian thought to

[1] Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), chap. 1.
[2] Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises*.
[3] Cline, *A World on Fire.*

use as the lens through which to accomplish his transposition. As Savary noted, "In the original *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius had no need to establish basic principles foundational to his own thought and spirituality, for his theological assumptions were much the same as those shared by almost everyone in Christian Europe at that time. However," as Savary astutely notes, "the same is not true today."[4] Savary then rewrote Ignatius' original meditations, provided instructions for the scriptural contemplations to focus on Teilhardian concerns, and offered new meditations in the vein of Ignatius' original exercises based on modern scientific understandings and Teilhardian thought.

Like Savary, I began my work by surveying literature within a broad definition of "ecofeminism," and distilling out the basic ecofeminist theological principles giving rise to this adaptation of the *Spiritual Exercises*.[5] As discussed further in Chapter 3, these principles were distilled in this case not from the work of one theologian, but from a variety of writers who have influenced my ecofeminist thought and spirituality.

Cline offers her own general principles for a faithful adaptation of the *Spiritual Exercises,* derived from a survey of adaptations by Jesuits and others.[6] Although Cline writes specifically in the context of adapting the *Spiritual Exercises* for those of other faiths, her principles of adaptation are useful both for adapting exercises to the needs of individual retreatants and for a global adaptation such as this "transposition" of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

The first principle is "to remove stumbling blocks that might prevent exercitants from successfully completing or getting as much as possible out of the *Exercises*."[7] This is at the heart

[4] Savary, *The New* Spiritual Exercises, 14.

[5] My initial survey, and distillation of basic ecofeminist principles from that survey, was conducted in a directed study at Claremont School of Theology with Dr. Yohanna Junker in the summer of 2023. However, my survey work continued after conclusion of that study.

[6] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 2.

[7] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 2.

of this ecofeminist adaptation project. If a particular meditation or element of the *Spiritual Exercises* clashes too jarringly with a retreatant's theology, experience, or worldview, they may become overly frustrated, disillusioned, or simply ignore that exercise. However, it is often the key meditations provided by Ignatius, such as the Two Standards, that present such difficulties. Leaving them out would significantly change the retreatant's experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Moreover, as Cline notes, "not only is there much to be gained from each meditation, but the meditations are interconnected, and a bad experience with one meditation" could color the retreatant's overall experience, "leading her to doubt whether the *Exercises* are really applicable to her life."[8]

However, not all difficulties posed by the *Spiritual Exercises* are detrimental to the retreatant or the goals of the retreat. Care must also be taken, Cline notes, "not to remove potential opportunities for growth."[9] The intent of this adaptation was to improve the relevance and resonance of the *Spiritual Exercises* for contemporary retreatants, making the *Exercises* more accessible to people today, while maintaining the integrity of the *Exercises* as a whole.

This segues into Cline's second principle, which is that an adaptation should "preserve the original design of the *Exercises*."[10] The original *Exercises* have been so effective, so transformational, for so many throughout their history. Care must be taken not to change them so much that the features that made them so effective and meaningful are lost. "The last thing we will want to do in any adaptation is undermine the effectiveness of the *Exercises*—which is a gift from God, but a gift that is given through the design, structure, and content of the *Exercises.*"[11]

[8] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 2.
[9] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 2.
[10] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 2.
[11] Cline, *A World on Fire,* chap. 2.

This ecofeminist adaptation retains the structure of Ignatius' original with the addition of the Preparation Weeks, a practice that has been widely adopted by those giving the *Spiritual Exercises* today. Most of the original elements, particularly the meditations and contemplations, are included.[12] Sometimes, all that was required to incorporate an ecofeminist perspective was to make slight updates to the language and imagery, or to choose gospel passages for contemplation that were likely to intersect with ecofeminist principles. In other areas, Ignatius' original meditation or approach needed to be completely reimagined or simply left out and additional readings or meditations added to accomplish similar goals.[13]

Central to all of this is discernment.[14] In the case of this project, that discernment began with my own experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*. As with Ignatius' original *Exercises*, these adapted Exercises reflect my own spiritual experience not only with the *Spiritual Exercises* but with other spiritual practices from a variety of sources. In addition, the creation of each week's set of exercises was surrounded by prayer. Indeed, in this process I found myself making the retreat again myself with an added layer of complexity. In effect, I was giving the Exercises to myself along the way and continuing to incorporate my experience, much as Ignatius originally did. Discernment continued throughout the research phase of this project as each week's set of exercises was offered to the retreatants in the focus group. I listened and reflected on their progress through the Exercises and discerned whether and how to make adjustments. The adaptions I made to the various Weeks of the Exercises is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

[12] There were a few annotations, such as the rules for eating (SE 210-217), that I just dropped, as do many other contemporary directors, as not appropriate in our contemporary cultural context.

[13] The use of supplemental readings or other material is a fairly common practice today. Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 2.

[14] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 2.

Research Methodology

To field test his innovative approach of adapting the *Spiritual Exercises* from a specific theological lens, Savary invited four of his Jesuit classmates to review his text and to make the retreat directed by him using his *New Spiritual Exercises*.[15] As I am working with the 19th Annotation format of the retreat, the *Exercises* in daily life, I needed to test my adapted Exercises in that retreat format. After receiving IRB approval of my research protocol,[16] I put out a call to those I know in the spiritual direction community and had eight women volunteer to be focus group retreatants to field test this project. Some were known to me, some were not, but all had completed spiritual direction formation and training in the past. They would make the retreat directed by me and help me assess my adaptation based on their experience of the retreat and their experience as spiritual directors.

I chose an action research model for assessment of data collected during this field test. "Action research is an action-oriented, participatory, and reflective approach to investigation."[17] This model is appropriate for this project for several reasons. First, it is a very practical approach aimed at solving specifically identified problems within a program, organization, or community.[18] This is very practical project that seeks to address specifically identified issues with the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*. The adaption created and then offered during the field test of this project represents the practical action taken to address those problems. The practical nature of action research also provides significant flexibility in methods of data collection, analysis and reporting.

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[15] I took a course in the *Exercises* with Matthew Linn, SJ, one of the four Jesuits who helped Savary field test his adapted *Exercises*. Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises*, vii.

[16] The IRB approved protocol is included in Appendix E.

[17] Ernest T. Stringer and Alfredo Ortiz Aragon, *Action Research,* 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2021), 41, Kindle.

[18] Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wiff & Stock, 2011), 59.

Second, the participatory nature of action research was particularly appropriate for this project. "Action research requires the collaborative participation of all stakeholders—those affected by or affecting the issues under consideration."[19] The stakeholders in this case are both retreatants making the *Spiritual Exercises*, particularly women, and spiritual directors who could offer the *Spiritual Exercises* to others. Offering the adapted Spiritual Exercises to a group of women spiritual directors, and inviting them to not only experience them, but also to reflect on them from the perspective of one who might offer them to another, engages maximum participation from these stakeholders and incorporates their lived experience to create a resource they might use to offer the adapted Exercises. In addition, as the director giving the adapted Spiritual Exercises, I worked collaboratively with those receiving the Exercises. My own experience is relevant data, which is not an option in research approaches where the researcher remains a neutral observer. This collaboration also mirrors the "graced collaboration" Ignatius imagined between a retreatant making his *Spiritual Exercises* and God in the inner work of transforming the self.[20] In Ignatius' view, "the individual is not a passive recipient of divine action; when making the *Exercises*, she intentionally makes efforts to bring about change in herself, but she is not solely responsible for this change."[21]

> Common approaches to academic research focus on experimental and quasi-experimental processes in which researchers deliberately exclude themselves from active participation in the research setting. Action researchers, however, take quite a different stance, which highlights their desire to work collaboratively with participants to achieve practical solutions to issues and problems they experience in their everyday lives.[22]

[19] Stringer and Aragon, *Action Research*, 41.
[20] Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster, U.K.: Gracewing, 1998), 1-2.
[21] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 1.
[22] Stringer and Aragon, *Action Research*, 1.

Third, Tim Sensing stresses the importance for Doctor of Ministry projects of coherence "between the project's problem, purpose, theology, action, intervention, and evaluation,"[23] Key principles of the action research model are the importance the participants' lived experience and the positive working relationships among those involved.[24] These mirror the ecofeminist theological principles of relationship and revelation through lived experience, so there is consonance between methodology and the theological foundations of this project. This approach also utilizes a spiral-shaped action/reflection process,[25] which reflects the similar movement within the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*. Furthermore, all of these elements are important in the practice of spiritual direction/companionship that is at the core of this project. For example, as Cline states so beautifully: "While God is the real director, the *Exercises* at critical junctures still rest upon the personal relationships between those who give the *Exercises* and those who make them."[26]

Thus, "'action research, in its most effective forms, is phenomenological (focusing on people's actual lived experience/reality), interpretive (focusing on their interpretation of acts and activities), and hermeneutic (incorporating the meaning people make of events in their lives).'"[27] The action research approach is not just about identifying problems, but a process of transformation of the individual participants and the community. This is a purpose it shares with both Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises* and this project. "The ultimate end of action research is to engage equitable processes to achieve social justice and enhanced well-being for key stakeholders."[28]

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[23] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 61.
[24] Stringer and Aragon, *Action Research*, 25.
[25] Stringer and Aragon, *Action Research*, 9.
[26] Cline, *A World on Fire,* chap. 2.
[27] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 56, quoting Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), 20.
[28] Stringer and Aragon, *Action Research,* 42.

The Action Part of "Action Research"

Having researched and created a draft ecofeminist-inspired Spiritual Exercises, the next step was the IRB-approved field test with my volunteer focus group of retreatants. Of the eight women in the focus group, seven had never done the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* before; one had made the retreat twice in the last twenty years. Five attended Protestant churches (and/or were Protestant clergy); two identified as Catholic but with a relatively liberal theology. One of the women who worshipped in a Protestant church was raised Catholic. All were particularly interested in the ecofeminist lens I was using for these Exercises.

I met with each of them for an initial one-on-one interview where we explored topics such as their experience of God and of nature, their current spiritual practices, if any, and their hopes for the retreat. We also discussed how and when we would meet. Four, who knew each other already, chose to meet via Zoom every other week for group spiritual direction. If circumstances prevented any of them meeting at the assigned group time, I would meet with them individually so they could keep up with the group. The other four chose to meet for individual spiritual direction. One, who lives close to me, wanted to meet in person every week; the other three met with me every other week via Zoom.

I sent everyone some background information on Ignatius, the *Spiritual Exercises*, and the list of ecofeminist principles I used for my adaptation of the *Exercises* to read and reflect on prior to beginning the formal adapted Exercises.[29] One week before we were to meet for our first spiritual direction session, I sent them the first week of exercises. To allow me to incorporate changes during this process, the start times were staggered by two weeks. As illness, family,

[29] In his *New Spiritual Exercises*, Savary recommended that those making the retreat using his new *Spiritual Exercises* "study and ponder these basic principles before beginning the formal process." Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises*, 14.

travel, internet issues and other circumstances of daily life made themselves known during the retreat, the meetings became even more staggered. I had expected some attrition in this lengthy process, but the retreatants remained very faithful. Only one member of the spiritual direction group was unable to keep up with the progress through the Exercises because circumstances in her life got in the way. However, she remained connected to the group and participated as she was able.

Each week I would send the retreatants the exercises for the coming week. Sometimes I would make changes in a given week's exercises based on what I was hearing in the sessions from the retreatants who started the process earlier and then used the new version with later retreatants when they progressed to that week. I kept notes on the changes and a chart of which versions of each week's exercises (A, B, or sometimes C) was sent to each retreatant.[30]

In our meetings, I served as spiritual director— listening, asking questions or making comments as appropriate, and making comprehensive notes of what the retreatants discussed as well as what I observed and experienced as the one giving the Exercises. During the sessions we began with silence to ground our time together. In the individual sessions, retreatants were invited to break that silence whenever they were ready to share what came up for them from the exercises in the time since we last met. In the group sessions, the group members took turns presenting to the group what came up for them, with the others in the group contemplatively listening and then responding with what they heard as an offering for the one sharing. This could be a question or an observation, or sometimes an image. When all that needed to be heard had been said about a presentation, the group prayed for that person, and then the next person

[30] I typed field notes into my computer after each session, shredding the handwritten originals and then saved the typed notes in a password protected folder, using pseudonyms to protect confidentiality per my IRB-approved research protocol.

presented from their experience. In the beginning, the group kept to a fairly strict rhythm of speech and silence as practiced in classic group spiritual direction.[31] However, as they progressed in the Exercises, we found a more relaxed format during this portion of the session allowed for a more meaningful session for all. After each person presented what they wanted to share, the group reflected on that day's sharing. This was a more free-flowing discussion guided by my questions that both improved the group process and allowed all of us to notice patterns or synchronicities within the group experience. I closed each individual or group session with a poem, prayer, or music.

During the field test, I met every other week with my experienced, Ignatian-trained spiritual director and supervisor, who was provided with a copy of my adapted Exercises. She served as a sounding board, assisted me in reflecting on how the retreatants were progressing through the adapted Exercises and in processing anything that came up for me in the focus group sessions. Supervision is an ethical requirement for spiritual directors.[32] Given the intensive nature of this spiritual direction-focused project, I felt it was important to meet regularly for accountability.

At the conclusion of the thirty-eight weeks of the adapted Exercises, I sent out a questionnaire to each retreatant.[33] Some retreatants sent me their responses to the closing questionnaire, some met with me in person for a closing interview based on those questions, and a few did both.[34] The notes for these interviews, for the initial interviews and direction sessions, and for the responses to the closing questionnaires were combined for analysis.

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[31] Rose Mary Dougherty, *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995).

[32] Spiritual Directors International, "Guidelines for Ethical Conduct: Revised Edition" (2018). Accessed website: https://www.sdicompanions.org/media/guidelines-for-ethical-conduct/.

[33] The closing questionnaire is attached as Appendix D.

[34] The retreatant who did not complete all thirty-eight weeks did not participate in the closing questionnaire or interview.

Data Analysis Process

Three questions were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the adapted Exercises: (1) Was the material presented in the retreat effective in guiding participants through the dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises*? (2) Did the retreat deepen participants' understanding of and engagement with the basic ecofeminist principles applied? (3) What was the retreatants' experience of the retreat?

Before beginning the analysis, I contemplatively read and re-read the combined data, noticing what overall themes or patterns emerged. Next, I made specific readings of the data set focusing each reading on one of the three questions for evaluation. I looked for key words or themes relating to each question and combined relevant material in one document so I could analyze the data for each question independently. Lastly, I reread and organized the data by week (of the thirty-eight weeks), to evaluate how the retreatants responded to each week's exercises, along with notes of changes made during the field test or afterwards based on the retreatants' feedback or my observation and experience in the field test. This allowed me not only to evaluate the effectiveness of individual weeks and exercises, but to see what other changes should be made based on this feedback.

The results of my analysis are reported in Chapter 5. The final version of the adapted Spiritual Exercises resource, which incorporates the feedback from retreatants and changes made based on my experience and observation, is included as Appendix A.

Chapter 3

Ecofeminist Theology

Ecofeminism is an insight and a practice.
However, ecofeminism is really ecofeminisms.
It is used by many diverse groups of women,
in multiple contexts and in a huge variety of ways.
— Heather Eaton[1]

Compared to Savary's work, an ecofeminist transposition of the *Exercises* has an added level of complexity because "just as there is not one feminism, there is not one ecofeminism."[2] While Savary had only to distill basic principles from one theologian to serve as the foundation of his adaptation of the *Exercises*, my project required a wider survey of ecofeminist writers. Moreover, because of the wide variation in what can be categorized as "ecofeminist" it is necessary to definite how I am using that term for the purposes of this project.

In general, feminism is a challenge to the patriarchy and to male-centered systems, beliefs, and practices.[3] Broadly speaking, the term "ecology" points to issues involving the natural environment. Feminism and ecology both come in a variety of flavors. Both have been applied to Christian theology and spirituality in a variety of ways. Twenty years ago, Heather Eaton wrote that "ecofeminist theology is to be understood as a loose term denoting the contributions that join together ecology, theology, and feminism."[4] In my survey, I looked to the work not only of those who self-identified as "ecofeminists," but also to those who "do not ever use the term 'ecofeminism,'" a position, I suspect, with which Eaton would agree.[5] Like Sallie

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[1] Heather Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 7.
[2] Karen J. Warren, "A Feminist Philosophical Perspective on Ecofeminist Spiritualities," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred,* ed. Carol J. Adams (New York: Continuum, 1993), 122.
[3] For an example in the Ignatian context see Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 11-18.
[4] Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 74.
[5] Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 12.

McFague, I am aware of my privileged white middle-class status,[6] and needed to balance that with the voices and perspectives of black, indigenous, and Latinx writers. Therefore, I also included within my definition the work of women whose writing defies any particular label, and who may not consider themselves "theologians," but who write at the intersection of theology or spirituality and the natural world.

Basic Principles of Ecofeminist Theology

The following are the twelve basic principles of ecofeminist theology that served as the theological foundation for these adapted Spiritual Exercises.[7]

1. Relationship is the Key Element of Life and Spirituality

Spirituality "is one's relationship with self, with others, with nature, with the universe, with the ancestors, and with the sacred source and great mystery of life and death."[8] Thus, it is "fundamentally about being in relationship, being aware of one's interdependence or connectedness to all that can be seen and all that is unseen."[9] Ecofeminists stress "relationship, not solely because it has been women's domain, but because it is a more viable ethical framework than autonomy for transforming structures that are environmentally destructive."[10]

Relationship is also key to the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*. Indeed, "the *Exercises* are not an end in themselves—they are only one means of building a more intimate relationship with God and putting faith into action."[11] Therefore, in adapting the *Exercises*, this principle did not

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[6] Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), Introduction, Kindle.

[7] In the final version of these adapted Exercise*s* attached in Appendix A, the basic principles that influenced particular exercises are noted in brackets, and cited in the text using parentheses. They will be cited as EF [principle number].

[8] Lara Medina, "Nepantla Spirituality: My Path to the Source(s) of Healing," in *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives*, ed. Elisa Facio and Irena Lara (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2014), Kindle.

[9] Medina, "Nepantla Spirituality."

[10] Adams, "Introduction," 5.

[11] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 29.

need to be introduced so much as emphasized. Relationship (or relationality) influenced or was embedded in nearly every exercise.

2. Interconnection and Interdependence

This is a specific aspect of relationality that is fundamental to ecofeminist thought.[12] We live within a "bodymindspiritnature" web or weaving of reality and consciousness.[13] "In ecofeminist culture and ethic, mutual interdependency replaces the hierarchies of domination as the model of relationship between men and women, between human groups, and between humans and other beings."[14]

We are not isolated and autonomous individuals, but deeply connected with our environment and radically dependent on the earth and the other beings with whom we share this home. "'Each of us needs to be awakened to a personal and compassionate recognition of the inseparable interconnection between our minds, hearts, and bodies; between our physical and psychical well-being; and between ourselves and all the other selves in our country and in the world.'"[15] Further, because "individuality and interrelatedness are characteristics of the universe," an understanding of our "radical interrelatedness and interdependence" is "of utmost importance to the development of an ecological sensibility."[16] This interrelationship also shows up in interlocking forms of oppression and evil such as sexism, racism, ableism, classism, and environmental abuse.

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[12] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1994), 251.

[13] Lara Medina and Martha R. Gonzales, *Voices from the Ancestors: Xicanx and Latinx Spiritual Expressions and Healing Practices* (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2019), 23, Kindle.

[14] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, ed. Carol J. Adams (New York: Continuum, 1993), 21.

[15] Laura E. Pérez, "Writing with Crooked Lines," in *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives*, ed. Elisa Facio and Irene Lara (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2014), Kindle.

[16] Sallie McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," 87, 92.

Carol Lee Sanchez likens this interrelatedness to what we experience within a healthy human family.

> Since we already have a conscious awareness of family interrelatedness that includes nurturing, assistance, and—for the most part—thoughtful consideration, one might ask: Why not include the rest of creation in our family circle? It's a short step to take and wouldn't require adopting an entirely new attitude concerning relationship but merely an e-x-p-a-n-s-i-o-n of our current notions about what (or who) constitutes our personal family.[17]

An experience of this interrelationship may take time to experience, but it begins with understanding and belief. Referencing the wisdom of Wallace Black Elk, Sanchez writes: "what we believe about our reality largely determines our experience, and if we believe we are related to everything in the universe, we will then *experience* this connectedness."[18]

3. God/Spirit is Source, Empowerment, and Relatedness

God is the very breath that gives life and energy, rather than what directs or controls, all that is.[19] However, God is not just general source energy (like the Force in *Star Wars*) but is also embodied in all the universe; the universe is "God's body."[20]

> God in ecofeminist spirituality, is the immanent source of life that sustains the whole planetary community. God is neither male nor anthropomorphic. God is the font from which the variety of plants and animals well up in each new generation, the matrix that sustains their life-giving interdependency with one another.[21]

Friendship is a model for right relationship between all beings and between God and the world. "Of the most central and powerful relational models for expressing the God/world relationship, 'friend' is the richest and most suggestive."[22] It implies both mutuality and

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[17] Carol Lee Sanchez, "Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral: The Sacred Connection," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred,* ed. Carol J. Adams (New York: Continuum, 1993), 214.

[18] Sanchez, "Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral," 214.

[19] Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit: Womanist Wordings of God and Creation* (Minneapolis: Augsbug Fortress, 1998), Prelude, Kindle; McFague, *The Body of God*, chap. 5.

[20] McFague, *The Body of God*.

[21] Ruether, "Ecofeminism," 21.

[22] Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology: Kenosis, Climate Change, and Befriending Nature* (Fortress Press, 2021), 70, Kindle.

reciprocity, "underscoring the adult nature of the relationship between God and human beings needed in our time."[23] God is also creativity "with creation playing a role in God's creative action,"[24] and God is relationship itself. "Both the world we see around us and humanity within it are expressions of the relatedness that characterizes all things. It is on the basis of this experience, and on-going beyond it, that we can thus affirm that God is relatedness."[25]

4. Science and Spirituality Must be Consistent

To be credible and valuable, our understanding of God and spirituality must be consistent with the evolving contemporary scientific understanding of reality. If we understand science and spirituality as consistent, then we can strengthen our relationship with God, the creative Source of the universe, by studying the universe itself.

> The first question one must ask is: *what* world? Probably the single most important thing that theologians can do for the planetary agenda is to insist that the 'world' in question, the world in which to understand both God and human beings, is the contemporary scientific picture of the earth, its history, and our place in it that is emerging from cosmology, astrophysics, and biology . . . A theology that is not commensurate with reality as culturally understood is not credible.[26]

This is especially important because of the "ecology" component of "ecofeminism." "The word "ecology" comes from the biological science of natural environmental communities. It examines how these natural communities function to sustain a healthy web of life and how they become disrupted, causing death to plant and animal life. Human intervention is the major cause of such disruption."[27] Our contemporary scientific understanding of the earth and the universe is key to ecofeminist thought.

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[23] McFague, *A New Climate for Christology,* 73.
[24] Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit,* chap. 13.
[25] Gebara, *Longing For Running Water,* chap. 3.
[26] McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," 92.
[27] Ruether, *Gaia & God*, 1.

5. Skepticism of Either/Or Constructs

Ecofeminists reject, or at least are skeptical of, binaries or dualisms such as: heaven/earth, male/female, mind/body, humans/animals, nature/nurture, reason/emotion, individual/communal, white/"non-white," good/evil, autonomy/connection, transcendence/immanence, or independence/interdependence.[28] "Hierarchical dualisms seem to skulk in the shadows of our understanding and organization of the world, and rear their heads only when challenged with alternative ways to appreciate and order things."[29]

Simplistic either/or constructs do not account for the complexity of life. "To perceive differences in pairs, such as day/night, left/right or up/down, is not necessarily a problem. It is when pairs are considered as opposites, and not just as different, that causes the trouble."[30] Giving one side of the binary more value than the other enables a culture of domination. Ecofeminists view these dualisms as being in more of a circular relationship to each other, rather than as opposites.[31]

6. Rejection of an Anthropocentric (Human Centered) and Androcentric (Male Centered) Worldview and Ways of Knowing

Ecofeminist epistemology emphasizes using a variety of ways of knowing, recognizing "there is no one model or criterion for determining what is authentic knowing."[32] No one individual, no one species, no one voice is the only one that counts.[33] What we have considered genuine "knowing" has in fact been limited to a particular perspective, centered on human male (especially white human male) interest, experience, and point of view.

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[28] Carol J. Adams, "Introduction," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred,* ed. Carol J. Adams (New York: Continuum, 1993), 2.
[29] Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 58.
[30] Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 38.
[31] Ruether, *Gaia & God,* 247-248.
[32] Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, chap. 1.
[33] McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," 87.

> The primary mode of knowing in Euro-western societies is analytic. Analysis sheds light on aspects of a situation, and can expose patterns, systems, causes and effects, and unmask power dynamics. It is the customary tool for feminists and ecofeminists. Yet analysis has its limits. Analysis cannot open the door to profound insights, to what can be known beyond all conventional knowing.[34]

All life has intrinsic value, so the perspectives and experience of those not centered by the dominant culture, particularly women, people of color, and the more-than-human world, needs to be lifted up to restore balance. This is not simple; we are humans and so naturally tend to be human-centered. However, "the anthropocentrism that certainly remains a part of each of us needs to be complemented by a wider biocentrism, an acknowledgment of the central importance of all life-forms. Our reflexive human experience does not exist in isolation from the whole of our Sacred Body."[35] Different beings, with different bodies and sensory capabilities, will experience the world differently. All those ways of knowing and experiencing are equally valid.

One way of moving beyond this is by using spiritual imagination, such as Ignatian contemplation. Ignatius used imagination to connect directly with the Divine, in the person of God the Father or Jesus Christ, as well as with spiritual ancestors such as the saints.[36] In a similar way, Gloria Anzaldúa used imagination to connect to her surroundings and the more-than-human world. Anzaldúa wrote of imagination:

> Spirit and mind, soul and body, are one, and together they perceive a reality greater than the vision experienced in the ordinary world. I know that the universe is conscious and that spirit and soul communicate by sending subtle signals to those who pay attention to our surroundings, to animals, to natural forces, and to other people. We receive information from ancestors inhabiting other worlds. We assess that information and learn how to trust that knowing. The mind does not make things up; it just imagines what exists and tells the soul to remember.[37]

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[34] Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 125.
[35] Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, chap. 1.
[36] For an example see O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure,* 141.
[37] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro (*Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 24, Kindle.

7. Embodiment

The image of the "universe as God's body,"[38] brings to the fore the importance of embodiment. Bodies, all bodies, are sacred; they have value not only as vessels for the "soul" or "spirit." "The value of the body, especially the bodies of the poor and their basic needs, began to show me the degree to which the following of Jesus required a 'religion' that started from the body: an incarnated religion, one rooted in human flesh and in the flesh of the earth."[39] Bodies matter. "We are spiritual beings in physical bodies,"[40] and need to remember and reconnect to our own bodies.

Bodies hold wisdom, trauma, all the range of our experience. Bodies also hold ancestral memory and experience.[41] I have heard one of my teachers, Cynthia Winton-Henry, say that all spiritual practices are embodied practices because we are in bodies as we practice them. "When patriarchal spirituality associates women, body, and nature, and then emphasizes transcending the body and transcending the rest of nature, it makes oppression sacred."[42] Cole Arthur Riley writes:

> I don't know much about heaven, but I have no reason to believe it won't be made right here. . . . Our talks of Christian escapism lead us to the place where the physical is damned and the immaterial is gloried. Where the only holy things are invisible. How could you expect me to believe this when I've met a God who drank from the breast of his creation? . . . The more detached I am from my body, the easier that body will be to colonize and use toward whiteness's own ends. . . .That is not to say I disbelieve in an unseen spiritual realm. On the contrary, I believe that the spiritual realm is so enmeshed with the physical that it is imperceptible.[43]

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[38] McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," 93; McFague, *The Body of God.*

[39] Gebara, *Longing For Running Water*, chap. 5.

[40] Medina and Gonzales, *Voices from the Ancestors,* 34.

[41] Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 4, Kindle.

[42] Adams, "Introduction," 1.

[43] Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us* (New York: Convergent Books, 2022), 57-59, Kindle.

One of the consequences of this embodied perspective is its impact on how we understand and experience "land" and "place." Land is not just real estate, or a medium in which to grow food or extract resources. Land sustains us and a myriad of other organisms. It is also identity and connection to ancestors – human and more-than-human.[44] We have and need a relationship to the places we live and have lived that help shape and form us, even though we may not be aware of how we have been impacted by where we have lived.[45] But most of all, land is sacred, because it too is an embodiment of God.

8. Revelation Though Lived Experience

Just as ecofeminist epistemology lifts up learning from embodied, lived experience, it recognizes that the Divine is revealed in that way. "The integration of knowledge from our body, our heart, and our mind is required to be in full or complete relationship with all that is."[46] Thus, "God is revealed *through* experience. The believer does not have faith in the experience, but in whom is revealed through it. But the medium of revelation is experience. This does not mean 'religious' experience. It means ordinary experience: the revelation of God's liberating love comes to us in the ordinary round of our lives."[47] From this perspective, "the Bible is a witness to revelations of God's love coming to the early Christians; these revelations continue as we become aware of God's love in new and different circumstances."[48]

This principle is very consistent with Ignatian spirituality and the *Spiritual Exercises*. For Ignatius, the content, the subject matter to be "exercised," is the retreatant's own life experience,

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[44] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 336.

[45] Melanie Harris, *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2017), 571, Kindle.

[46] Medina, "*Nepantla* Spirituality."

[47] Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril (*Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 53.

[48] McFague, *Life Abundant,* 53.

which is illuminated by the life experience of Jesus.[49] What an ecofeminist perspective can add to this is a variety of ways of knowing or accessing this experience and an explicit recognition that God is revealed to us in this process.

9. Sin and Evil as Failure of Relationship

Ecofeminists such as Sallie McFague call "for a renewed emphasis on sin as the cause of much of the planet's woes and an emphasis on a broad and profound repentance."[50] However, ecofeminism reinterprets the traditional Christian concept of sin in important ways. "Ecofeminism situates sin within the interlocking oppressions of ethnicity, colonialism, class, gender, and the domination of the earth. Sin exists where life cannot thrive."[51] Sin can be individual or collective.

We carry within us the potential to align ourselves in relationship to God and Creation, and to withdraw from relationship into self-centered isolation. "We crucify the earth daily, sometimes intentionally and sometimes not."[52] Evil is the potential we ourselves construct; the refusal to recognize the reality of our interconnection and interdependence.[53] Sin is the behavior of living out that potential by acting without regard for the effect of our behavior on other beings or the environment. "Evil consists in refusing to recognize that there is no singular 'I' but only the 'we' of life with others: 'we are ourselves the relation among all beings' as we respond each to the other in self-giving love. Sin is the condition of humankind closed in upon itself."[54] It is the failure, or rupture, of relationship.[55]

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[49] Fleming, *Like the Lightning*, 9.
[50] McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," 88.
[51] Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 79.
[52] Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*, chap. 5.
[53] Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, Prelude.
[54] McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, 61.
[55] Ruether, *Gaia & God*, 256.

10. Restoration of Right Relationship as our Human Vocation

The earth is in crisis because of human sin. As humans we have benefited from and share responsibility for the current state of the planet. "We are all complicit. We've allowed the 'market' to define what we value so that the redefined common good seems to depend on profligate lifestyles that enrich the sellers while impoverishing the soul and the earth."[56]

Each of us is therefore called to actively work towards restoration of the well-being of the earth and of all who call the earth home using our unique individual talents, passion, knowledge and insight. "In different ways each of us has a calling, is being summoned, to put our talents, passion, and insights into planetary well-being."[57]

This is an active expression of the love of God in the world. In this way, we partner with God for healing and restoration. "When we begin to imagine a different world, a different societal structure, a different way of relating to the divine and ourselves, we can find creative and subversive ways to question and resist oppression."[58] Moreover, working towards restoration of right relationship "is a powerful antidote to despair. Restoration offers concrete means by which humans can once again enter into positive, creative relationship with the more-than-human world, meeting responsibilities that are simultaneously material and spiritual."[59]

This is spiritual activism, putting spirituality to work for positive social and ecological change, and it is a crucial aspect of ecofeminist theology and spirituality. "Ecofeminism is intended to be about praxis. This means active engagement with and resistance of the forces of destruction, and the promotion of alternatives."[60] Ecofeminists understand that "*Spirituality is*

[56] Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass,* 307.
[57] McFague, *The Body of God*, chap. 1.
[58] Armas, *Abuelita Faith,*182.
[59] Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 328.
[60] Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 123.

Revolutionary; Revolution is Spiritual; and the foundation of this space is love, revolutionary and spiritual love."[61] However, "it's not enough to just stop doing bad things."[62] Instead, "we must literally re-member ourselves. We have become disembodied. We are disembodied from community. We are disembodied from self. We are disembodied from God. We are disembodied from earth. To become whole is to re-member."[63]

11. Salvation for All Creation

As understood in this context, "salvation" comes in the fabric of ordinary life.[64] "The promise of the fulfillment of the Spirit's healing, creating presence on earth is woven together with apocalyptic hope in the midst of the daily work and struggles of life."[65] It is not a one-time event but something that must be sought every day. "In practice we must always begin again every day the search for salvation just as every day we have to begin again the actions of eating and drinking. It is a dynamic movement in the innermost part of our lives."[66]

Salvation is embodied and available broadly to all creation as a movement towards restoration, repair and the well-being of all life.

> Restoration of right relationship with God includes restoration of right relationship with one another and with the earth. Restoration of right relationship with the earth requires restoration of right relationship between people across class lines, so that a healthy environment becomes a right of all instead of a privilege of the wealthy. Such restoration is redemptive because we move toward God's intention of harmonious interrelatedness.[67]

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[61] Elisa Facio, "Spirit Journey: 'Home' as a Site for Healing and Transformation," in *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives,* ed. Elisa Facio and Irene Lara (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2014), Kindle.

[62] Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 328.

[63] Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*, chap. 5.

[64] Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 121.

[65] Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*, chap. 13.

[66] Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 123.

[67] Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit,* chap. 1.

Thus, "it is not enough to interrogate or deconstruct structures of oppression; it is also necessary to work for the construction of corrective models, methods, that debunk racialized myths and stereotypes, and approaches that are liberating for all of the earth community."[68]

12. Separating Jesus and His Teaching from Religious Doctrine

Christology is of particular importance for this project, because the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* are fundamentally based on the life of Jesus. From an ecofeminist perspective, we need to speak of Jesus from our own lived experience, rather than from church doctrine that sacralizes violence and enables patriarchy and oppression.

Jesus is the embodiment, the incarnation, of God love in human form in the ordinariness of human existence, demonstrating the value of physical bodies and the sacredness of the ordinary. "God's embodiment in Jesus," writes ecowomanist Karen Baker-Fletcher, is "significant not only because God is embodied in a human but because God is embodied in a creature, and by extension, in all creation."[69] Similarly, Sallie McFague writes that the "incarnation," the embodiment of God in the human person of Jesus, "is a messy business, or it should be. It is about God as really, truly, deeply being one of us, one who is with us in all the dark, dreary, and shocking parts of our lives."[70] Moreover, following Jesus necessarily "has to do with the basics of life: food, water, health, education, and so on—whatever makes up the good, earthly life for various species." Christian spirituality becomes about following the path Jesus walked, as a way of life, not about believing any particular church doctrines. Ignatian contemplation is uniquely suited to this task.

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[68] Harris, *Ecowomanism*, chap. 2.
[69] Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit,* chap. 1.
[70] McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, 16.

Ecofeminism and Ignatian Spirituality

I found that ecofeminist thought weaves in beautifully with Ignatian spirituality and the *Exercises*. There are many points of connection. For example, Sallie McFague, among others, affirms that "everything that is, is in God and God is in all things."[71] Similarly, an important aspect of Ignatian spirituality is seeing "God in all things."[72] Ecofeminist theologians also stress the importance of relationship. Indeed, Ivone Gebara defines God **as** relationship,[73] and Sallie McFague expressly uses "friendship" as the model for the God/world interaction. One traditional aim of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to develop a friendship with Jesus and deepening relationship with God.[74]

Another point of connection is the understanding that the purpose of religion or spirituality is not to benefit the individual alone. Ignatius and the first Jesuits described themselves as "contemplatives in action" going out to "set the world on fire."[75] Ignatius structured his *Spiritual Exercises* so that those completing the inner spiritual work of the retreat would then go out into the world as agents of change for God's kingdom.

Social and political action or activism is an important component of theology for many feminists and ecofeminists, particularly those approaching the work from a liberation perspective.[76] Gloria Anzaldúa wrote about "spiritual activism," as a "politics of spirit that offers a holistic approach to social change with metaphysical/ontological, epistemological, ethical, and

[71] McFague, *The Body of God*, chap. 5; Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, chap. 3; O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 3.

[72] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 3, 7, 75.

[73] Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, chap. 3.

[74] McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, 73, Kindle; Fleming, *Draw Me Into Your Friendship*, 3; O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 55-56, 59.

[75] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 10.

[76] Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 105-109.

aesthetic components."[77] She is often quoted as saying, "I change myself, I change the world," a statement that echoes forward in activist Grace Lee Boggs' "Transform yourself to transform the world," taken up as a slogan now by writer and organizer adrienne marie brown.[78] I think Ignatius would approve.

These points of connection meant that sometimes all that was required for an ecofeminist adaptation of the *Exercises* was to frame things in a way that highlights something already present in the original *Exercises*. In other parts of the *Exercises*, however, a more complete revisioning was necessary, particularly to transpose the *Exercises* to a non andro- or anthropocentric key. This could be as simple as giving priority to scriptures that feature women or as complex as including exercises designed to encourage an experience of the interconnection between our human selves and the more than human world.

One aspect of an ecofeminist approach, which might be better described as "methodology" rather than "theology," is particularly pertinent to the process of adapting the *Spiritual Exercises*: revisioning or reinterpretation. "Revisioning means looking again, 'in order to correct or improve.' This is an important aspect of ecofeminism."[79] Reinterpreting the biblical text and Christian theology, that not only has historically been interpreted through an androcentric and anthropocentric lens but was written from that perspective, is a key project for Christian ecofeminists.[80] A core ecofeminist hermeneutic is "a receptiveness to new spiritual insights and religious experience."[81] This is entirely consistent with the Ignatian approach, using spiritual imagination to directly experience the biblical text and connect with the Divine. The

[77] AnaLouise Keating, *The Anzaldúan Theory Handbook* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 203, Kindle.
[78] brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 2.
[79] Adams, "Introduction," 5.
[80] Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 81.
[81] Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 113.

revisioning aspect of ecofeminism was incorporated into this project in several ways, including the rewriting of Ignatian elements of the *Exercises*, such as the Two Standards, based on ecofeminist principles, and encouraging retreatants to rewrite or revision the scriptural text or its interpretation based on ecofeminist theological principles and their own experience and imagination.

This revisioning includes "spirituality" itself. "It is a western construct to understand spirituality as strictly a personal matter."[82] Instead, "spirituality is the essence of living, how we move through life to become human and be human."[83] From this perspective, "spirituality is a major aspect of one's face and heart, as spirituality is a way of life deeply aware of one's relationship to self, to others, and to the sacred source of life and death."[84] Spirit and spirituality are not separate from reality, but are essential aspects of it.

> Concretizing our spiritual lives through words and image, and in turn, spiritualizing our material lives, allows us to paint a fuller picture of our realities. This work resists dominant western thought that would have us split our bodies, our faith, and bones and cells, from our spirits—the invisible, yet felt aspect of our beings that is part of our life force—as if they were separate or opposite.[85]

I understand spirituality, from this ecofeminist perspective, as "a way of life that impacts how we act in the world."[86]

Of course, my whole project is an exercise in ecofeminist revisioning, because it is "committed to the elimination of male-gender privilege and power over women, and to value women's experiences and perspectives," as well as the elimination of the oppression of nature.[87] Karen Warren emphasizes the phrase "committed to the elimination of" because "in the pre-

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[82] Medina, "Nepantla Spirituality."
[83] Elisa Facio, "Spirit Journey."
[84] Medina and Gonzales, *Voices from the Ancestors*, 23.
[85] Lara and Facio, *Fleshing the Spirit*, 23.
[86] Medina, "Nepantla Spirituality."
[87] Warren, "A Feminist Philosophical Perspective," 124.

feminist, patriarchal present, it is not possible to consistently, thoroughly, and honestly be nonsexist or non-naturist. The best one can do now is to be sincerely and honestly committed to the elimination of sexism and naturism in one's practice and theory."[88] Indeed, this is a decolonizing "spirituality as resistance"; we resist in order to transform.[89]

But given how enmeshed we all are in the patriarchal, colonialist, dominant culture, this process of transformation is not easy. This project attempts a transposition of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* to a different key so that the revisioned Exercises themselves can create a space that enables retreatants to be transposed as well. For those willing to fully engage, the *Spiritual Exercises* can be a space of nepantla, a Nahuatl (indigenous Mexican and South American) word used by Gloria Anzaldúa to describe a transition phase, literally the space "in-between" or "in the middle."[90] It "is the uncertain terrain that we cross when changing from one place to another. It is a space of constant tension where transformation and healing may be possible. Our journeys of decolonizing and indigenizing, and of deconstruction and reconstruction, are that of nepantla. They are sacred spaces of learning, growing, shifting, becoming."[91]

[88] Warren, "A Feminist Philosophical Perspective," 124.
[89] Medina, "Nepantla Spirituality."
[90] Keating, *Handbook*, 156. In her writing, Anzaldúa rejects the use of italics for non-English words in order to give them equal status with Western and English thought. I adopt that practice here.
[91] Kat Armas. *Abuelita Faith: What Women on the Margins Teach Us about Wisdom, Persistence, and Strength* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2021), 8, Kindle.

Chapter 4

The Exercises in an Ecofeminist Key

How to speak of [Jesus]
not just with methodological coherence,
but out of my own relationship life experience.
— Ivone Gebara[1]

With Cline's general principles for adaption and my set of basic ecofeminist principles in mind, I began the work of creating a directory of adapted exercises. The first discernment point was format. Some Ignatian directories, such as Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, provide more general guidance for the one giving the *Exercises*. It is up to the director to incorporate their comments into the retreat as they offer it. Others, such as Tetlow and O'Brien, provide very specific suggestions and materials for a 19th Annotation retreat on a week-by-week, or even day-by-day, basis. Savary did a little bit of both, providing both general guidance for each of the four primary Weeks, but with some specifically reimagined meditations and contemplations. Since in my experience as a director I found the format used by O'Brien and Tetlow to be the easiest to use for the 19th Annotation *Spiritual Exercises*, that is format I chose for the directory created in this project.

The 19th Annotation does not specify a certain number of weeks, but is generally considered to take approximately nine months, including the Preparation Weeks. For example, O'Brien's directory includes thirty-six weeks. Following the structure of Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* fairly closely I found the material fell naturally into that general time frame. The additional two weeks in these adapted Exercises were largely the result of either: (1) lingering slightly longer in certain areas of the Exercises, or (2) expanded opportunities for review and reflection back over the previous weeks' exercises. Of course, the length will always depend on

[1] Gebara, *Longing For Running Water*, chap. 5.

the continuing discernment of the one giving the *Spiritual Exercises* and the retreatant; it is sometimes beneficial to linger for longer in certain material.

The full text of the adapted Exercises is included as Appendix A. They are numbered sequentially by week and day for all thirty-eight weeks. For example, exercise 3.2 would be the material for the second day of the third week. The Basic Ecofeminist Principles served as a foundation, provided the overall perspective for the adapted Spiritual Exercises, and also directly or explicitly inspired individual exercises. The principles that inspired individual meditations are noted in the final resource and there is a chart in Appendix B showing which principles were directly explored in each of the thirty-eight weeks. Not surprisingly, this chart shows that the first and third ecofeminist principles, both of which emphasize relationship, are operative in nearly every week. Similarly, the sixth principle, which involves different ways of knowing and perspectives beyond the anthropocentric or androcentric, was also directly involved in nearly every week, as the themes of each week were explored in a variety of ways. The twelfth principle, separating Jesus from religious doctrine, was involved in every week that included Ignatian contemplation of gospel texts. The other principles were explored in individual exercises spread throughout the retreat. The eighth principle, revelation through lived experience, was operative throughout the retreat because every exercise brought forth the lived experience of the retreatant. However, that principle shows up in the chart only where that principle is directly or explicitly addressed. Only the two review weeks (week 26 and week 38) involved all of the twelve principles.

The breakdown of the thirty-eight weeks is as follows:

Preparation Weeks (weeks 01-05)
First Week (weeks 06-11)
Second Week (weeks 12-26)
Third Week (weeks 27-32)

Fourth Week (weeks 33-38)

Each set of exercises for a particular (lower case "w") week begins with some introductory material for the subject of that week. This introductory material includes epigraph quotes from a variety of writers and sometimes some of my own commentary. The epigraphs served to expose the retreatant to different voices and set the tone for the week. Many of the quotes re-emphasize the themes of the distilled Basic Ecofeminist Principles as a foundation for the exercises of that week. One retreatant commented about the epigraphs and other quotes: "I also appreciated that the voices were women, and especially the women of color. I was introduced to so many people because of this."

Exercises were provided for each of the seven days of the week, though typically for at least two days the retreatant was encouraged to repeat one of the exercises of the week. Repetition is an important aspect of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises.* "Repetition" for Ignatius did not mean simply to do the same exercise again, but instead to start with the insights and consolations derived from that exercise and then to explore those more deeply (SE 62). The seventh day of each week was a review of the week. At the end of each (capital "W") Week, exercises were offered to encourage the retreatant to reflect back on the insights of that Week, lingering and "savoring them interiorly" (SE 2). I found such reviews very beneficial when I made the retreat myself, and the reviews were very fruitful for my focus group retreatants as well. I therefore added longer, more directed reviews, using different techniques, at the end of the Second Week and at the end of the whole retreat (week 26 and week 38). From the feedback I received during the retreat and in the closing questionnaires and interviews, these additional reviews were clearly appreciated by the retreatants; one wanted even more time in review.

Each day's material included something to read, look at, or listen to such as a scripture text, poem, handout, a piece of music, or a video. In creating the adapted Exercises, I needed to keep in mind the flow, or dynamics, of each day, each week, and each phase or Week.[2] There were instructions for the practice or reflection for that day and a suggested closing which might be supplemental material or simply silence or a breath prayer. The use of supplemental material, that is non-scriptural material, is common today.[3] The intention behind using extensive supplemental material in these adapted Exercises was to allow for different ways of knowing, consistent with ecofeminist epistemology. For a similar reason, some exercises expressly invited art, movement, or creative writing responses and retreatants were encouraged to use art journaling or other creative responses to all the exercises. The overwhelming majority of supplemental material (and epigraph quotes) included were created by women, although a few pieces by men were included to make specific points in keeping with the ecofemininst approach.

Lastly, Ignatius was interested in the place in which retreatants made their prayer. He included specific suggestions for how to adjust the space so that the physical space or atmosphere was consistent with the emotional tenor of that week. For example, he suggested doing the prayers for the Third Week, which includes the Passion, in a darkened room (SE 79). In keeping with the ecofeminist emphasis on connection and relationship with the more-than-human world, in these adapted Exercises retreatants were encouraged to do all or part of the exercises outside, or somewhere they could connect with nature. In addition, the first exercise for each phase or Week of these Exercises encouraged the retreatant to create an altar space (inside

[2] Fleming, *Like the Lightning*, 16-17.

[3] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 2; Matthew Linn, "Directing the Extended Ignatian Exercises" (class lecture, Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality, online, February 15, 2022).

or outside) reflecting their intention for the Week. This served as a transition to each Week and helped remind the retreatant of the work being done throughout the day.

The following is a list of adaptations and additions Week by Week. This is not an exhaustive list, but describes the major and most representative examples. In all of Ignatius' original meditations, language, imagery and embedded theology had to be reworked. Some changes were made during the research phase of this project, based on feedback from the focus group retreatants. Some mid-course changes were very minor, like correcting typographical errors or unintentional duplications. Sometimes I added epigraph quotes to provide more context for the week. However, the most significant changes made during the field test are discussed here.

The Preparation Weeks

In some ways, this was the most difficult section of the adapted retreat to create, because Ignatius did not provide any structure for it. Today, the use of other exercises to prepare a retreatant is very common. For example, both Kevin O'Brien and Karen Keen offer six weeks of Preparation exercises.[4] I chose to include five weeks, however, retreatants were given material to read in advance of receiving the Week 01 material: introductory instructions, a biography of Ignatius of Loyola, and a list of the Basic Ecofeminist Principles. It is then within the discretion of the director, and the discernment of the director and retreatant together, whether the retreatant is ready to move into the First Week at the end of the Preparation Weeks.[5]

[4] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*; Karen R. Keen, *The Jesus Way: Practicing the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises: A 19th Annotation Retreat in Daily Life* (Garland, TX: Contemplatio Publishing, 2020), Kindle.

[5] The director may also discern that it would be more fruitful for the retreatant to start with Third Week material, because that reflects the retreatant's current reality. The *Exercises* do not need to be given in a strictly linear fashion but can be seen as a spiral. O'Brien, class lecture, July 14, 2024.

Ignatian directors disagree on how to assess if someone is ready or appropriate to make the full *Spiritual Exercises*. For some, the bar is quite low. O'Brien recommends that the individual should have a habit of praying and, most importantly, an "open generosity of spirit."[6] Matthew Linn's basic criteria are similar: (1) they have the time to devote to the Exercises, and (2) they come with an understanding and experience of a God of Love.[7] On the other hand, Tomeu Barcello, Director of the Center for Ignatian Studies at Boston College, sets the bar quite a bit higher. He lists his criteria as: (1) psychological maturity, (2) Christian maturity, (3) a desire to integrate life and faith, (4) a "fighting attitude," (5) significant time to devote to the Exercises each day ("If you are not spending the time, you are not doing the *Spiritual Exercises*"), (6) the capacity to create silence, (7) the capacity for community, and (8) the capacity for self-examination.[8]

I lean towards Linn's and O'Brien's lower bar, but I would describe the criteria slightly differently. Time, that is having sufficient time to devote to the *Exercises*, is frequently mentioned in Ignatian literature. My experience, including from this project, is that the issue is less about time (or being willing and able to spend a certain time each day) and more about capacity, that is having the emotional/mental/spiritual bandwidth. Those who have a genuine openness and desire to do this inner work and who have the bandwidth find a way to make the time to do the exercises, even in the midst of the busiest of schedules and multiple personal or

[6] O'Brien, class lecture, July 15, 2024.

[7] Matthew Linn, Directing the Extended Ignatian Exercises (class lecture, Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality, Online course, February 9, 2022.

[8] Tomeu Barcello, The Dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises: An Intensive for Spiritual Directors Accompanying Others in the 19th Annotation Retreat (class lecture, Boston College, Online course, July 5, 2024).

professional crises. Indeed, for me, this is part of what it means to do the *Exercises* "in daily life," because life is full of such challenges.[9]

Similarly, I do not feel having a regular prayer practice is a necessary pre-requisite to making the retreat. Tetlow agrees: "I have had as good experiences with those who never prayed before as I have had with those who had been praying regularly for some time."[10] The Preparation Weeks allow the retreatant to become accustomed to the rhythm of the retreat: the daily exercises, the structure of the prayer periods, the daily Examen practice, and the time commitment involved. Many (if not most) potential retreatants today come with little or no structured, daily prayer practice. Indeed, several of the retreatants in my focus group expressed that one of their goals for the retreat was the development of such a regular practice of prayer, or in other words, the integration of spirituality into their daily lives. However, if a retreatant's practice is not relatively regular by the end of the Preparation period, they may not be ready to continue into the First Week.

In addition to being a discernment tool, the Preparation Weeks serve several important functions for the overall success of the retreat. For example, this Preparation period provides an opportunity to introduce the retreatant to Ignatian and ecofeminist concepts and practices that will be carried through the retreat, such as the Examen and the concept of spiritual freedom. Essentially, during this preparation period the retreatant prayerfully explores different elements or themes of the Principle and Foundation, the first prayer listed by Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises*, and then concludes with meditation on that prayer itself.

[9] I have found it important, as Susan Stabile recommends, to start each direction session with a check in to see what daily life the retreatant has been working within. Susan Stabile, "Directing the Extended Ignatian Exercises" (class lecture, Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality, Online course, February 9, 2022).

[10] Tetlow, *Choosing Christ in the World*, 186.

Perhaps the most important thing to be explored in this period is the retreatant's functional image and experience of God. Is their God a loving God? Have they experienced God as Love in some way they can identify? An implicit or explicit functional image of God as harsh and judgmental, leading to a deep experience of shame by the retreatant, is one of the biggest barriers to beginning the full *Spiritual Exercises*.[11] In this situation, the preparation period can be extended to allow for further exploration. Also, consistent with ecofeminist theology, in the adapted Exercises multiple images or metaphors for God were explored, as was the retreatant's lived experience in and with relationships to other humans, the land, and the more-than-human world. If God is relationship, and relationship is key to spirituality (EF 1, 3), then our experience of relationships of all kinds are a spiritual matter.

Topics for each week of this preparation phase:

Week 01 – Beginning
Week 02 – Love
Week 03 – Body of God
Week 04 – Presence
Week 05 – Principle and Foundation

One of the adaptations specific to this Week is how the Principle and Foundation is addressed. In addition to praying with the Principle and Foundation as provided by Ignatius in one or more of its many contemporary translations, retreatants were invited to write their own Principle and Foundation, reflecting their own lived experience of God at that time (5.4). Retreatants were then invited to continue to pray with this throughout the retreat, if so moved, and to return to it at the end of the retreat and reflect on whether they would then write it differently (38.1).

[11] Linn, class lecture, February 9, 2022.

Based on feedback from the focus group retreatants, both as they went through the retreat and in the closing questionnaire, I made a few changes to the Preparation Weeks material. First, I revised the introductory material to include several retreatant recommendations: (1) to keep their journal or notes very organized so they can easily return to them to do the review reflections, (2) to keep a YouTube (or other) playlist of their favorite music as the retreat goes on so they can easily go back to those songs, especially as the Preparation Week resources are intended to be accessed in later weeks as appropriate. The resources collected in the Preparation Weeks often involve experiences of God's presence and love, which can support retreatants while working through difficult exercises in the First and Third Weeks. Also, because most of the focus group retreatants struggled to get into the rhythm at the beginning of the retreat, I added words of encouragement to both the introductory material and Week 01. However, I did not add an outline for the whole retreat, as one retreatant suggested, because Ignatius specifically recommended against letting retreatants know in advance what was coming in later Weeks, so that they would focus on the exercises before them (SE 11).

During the field test, it became clear after meeting with the first retreatants that exercise 4.2 was confusing and not working as intended. Exercise 4.1 invited the retreatant to work with a memory of a time they felt close to God. Exercise 4.2 instructed retreatants to repeat exercise 4.1, but with another different memory. I revised exercise 4.2 to come at their experience of love a different way, using the image of "home." Later retreatants received that revised exercise, which seemed to be more fruitful.

Lastly, I observed at the end of the Preparation Weeks meetings that many retreatants were still unclear about the core Ignatian principles of spiritual or interior freedom and disordered attachments. For example, two retreatants rewrote the Principle and Foundation but

did not mention anything resembling freedom or detachment. I made several revisions to the adapted Exercises to place more emphasis on this concept, creating a separate handout on Inner Freedom, adding a reflection on Galatians 5.1, and switching out one of the songs in Week 05 to one with a freedom theme. Comments later in the field test suggested that principle had been better integrated.

The First Week

The theme of the First Week of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* is often misunderstood as being about sin, understandable since Ignatius himself described the graces of the First Week as "growing and intense sorrow and tears for my sins" (SE 55), feeling "an interior knowledge of my sins and also an abhorrence of them," and perceiving "the disorder in my actions, in order to detest them, amend myself, and put myself in order" (SE 62). However, "although sin provides the focus, the First Week really dwells on love, God's love, which is greater than human sin."[12] The intent is for retreatants to be able to honestly name their own sins and to experience God's love meeting them in that place. "Whatever hell you are in, God loves you right there."[13] In the First Week we stand before God in all our authentic and honest vulnerability and know ourselves loved.

Yet, from an ecofeminist perspective, an understanding of sin is vital to understanding what is happening in our world, and our complicity and responsibility for it.[14] Therefore, throughout the First Week of the adapted Exercises, an emphasis was placed on the ecofeminist principle that sin is the rupture of relationship – not just between us and God, but also between us and other humans, and between humans, the earth, and the more-than-human world (EF 9).

[12] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed,* 125.
[13] Linn, class lecture, February 16, 2022.
[14] McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," 88.

Before moving into meditation on our own individual sin, Ignatius began with exercises that help the retreatant understand the meaning of "sin" and its scope by meditating on the "sin of the angels" (SE 50), the sin of Adam and Eve (SE 51), and to imagine "the particular sin of anyone who has gone to hell because of one mortal sin" (SE 51). This provided the first opportunity for intense ecofeminist revisioning, both in the design of these adapted exercises and for the retreatants themselves.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the First Week contains most of the few meditations that I removed in their entirety as being culturally anachronistic or reflecting theology inconsistent with ecofeminist principles. The first was the meditation on the sin of the angels. The language and imagery are outdated, off-putting for many contemporary retreatants (particularly Protestants or seekers), and reflect a theology and worldview that is not relatable for many today. Also, many retreatants today do not even know the story of the fall of the angels, which comes primarily from Christian tradition, not the Bible. It is not a story most Protestants are taught, unless they study John Milton's "Paradise Lost" in school.

I see the primary value of this meditation as inviting exploration of the broader, even cosmic, scope of sin. However, in my experience the fanciful nature of the story makes it feel irrelevant to contemporary life. I replaced this meditation with a series of meditations on structural and social sin in Weeks 09 and 10, which gave retreatants an opportunity to explore the broader implications of sin for humans and the more-than-human world, as well as their own complicity with systemic oppression (9.2-9.5, 10.1, 10.2). I did not completely remove the third abstract meditation, on an anonymous sinner, but incorporated the concept—looking at sin in the abstract—in other First Week meditations.

Next came consideration of what to do with Ignatius' meditation on Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden— a story that has been used (and is still being used) to oppress and condemn women (and snakes) and to condone human disconnection from and misuse of creation. This is a biblical story that must be critiqued before the meaning and wisdom it holds for today can be retrieved.[15] In the adapted Exercises, retreatants first wrestled with the story as it stands, paying particular attention to emotions and memories that arise (6.3). Then for the next two days (more with repetition), retreatants were invited to reread the story in the context of different translations and contemporary interpretations.

This was a very fruitful series of exercises for several of the focus group retreatants. Those who particularly struggled with the story deconstructed or rewrote it in ways that felt life-giving, liberating, and empowering to them. My observation is that the practice of wrestling and reframing this key biblical text helped free these women from traditional biblical interpretations and laid the foundation for freer revisioning and engagement with gospel passages using Ignatian contemplation later in the retreat.

Another ecofeminist addition was bringing Mary, the mother of Jesus, into the First Week. Women are scarce in the traditional First Week material. I did this using one of the lesser-known titles for Mary, "Untier of Knots" (11.1). Most Protestants have only a passing acquaintance with Mary, and that mostly from the Advent texts, so for many this was an introduction to her outside of that context. These adapted Exercises encouraged a deeper relationship with Mary, and other biblical women, in a number of ways intended to allow those women agency and voice.[16]

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[15] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 138.

[16] For example, almost every colloquy in the adapted Exercises lists Mary as a conversation partner, rather than just including her where Ignatius called for the "Triple Colloquy."

Another key Ignatian First Week meditation, the Meditation on Our Own Sins, needed major reworking. First, I incorporated the concept into several exercises to allow for deeper reflection on individual elements (8.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.5, 10.1, 10.3, 11.2). Retreatants then were repeatedly invited, in a variety of ways, to consider where there has been a rupture of relationship in their lives, and then to name and acknowledge it.

Second, in the traditional version, a section of this meditation has the retreatant imagine standing at the foot of the cross looking up at the crucified Jesus as they reflect on three questions: "What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?" (SE 53). To make the connection to a wider ecology, I added the option of standing at the foot of a tree, gazing up into its spreading branches. In addition, the language was reframed consistent with ecofeminist worldview and theology, including the substitution of "Love" for "Christ" (11.2).

Lastly, I substituted a Meditation on Grace (11.4) for the traditional Meditation on Hell (SE 65-71). The point of the original meditation was to confirm God's mercy and to inspire our own gratitude.[17] It seemed to me, however, that threatening retreatants with a hell they did not believe in, as is the case for many contemporary retreatants, particularly Progressive Protestants, would do neither. In addition, as constructed, this meditation did not reflect ecofeminist theology, particularly the view of a loving God who is relationship (EF 3). The Meditation on Grace instead mirrored the earlier Meditation on Our Sins from Week 08, but instead of scanning their life to notice the places where there was a rupture in relationships, the retreatant was invited to scan their life for moments of grace, that is, times when they experienced forgiveness, unconditional love, or acceptance from particular individuals or from God. The intent of this

[17] O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 104.

revised meditation, as with the original, was to lead retreatants to the sense of gratitude and freedom from shame and the baggage of the past that indicate readiness to continue into the Second Week.

Topics of the First Week:

Week 06 – What is Sin?
Week 07 – Sin and Grace
Week 08 – My Own History of Sin and Grace
Week 09 – Our Sin and the World
Week 10 – Social Sin and Metanoia
Week 11 – Repentance and Grace

The Second Week

The Second Week is the longest phase of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Even when the *Spiritual Exercises* are given over a one-month period, the Second Week takes up about two weeks of the retreat. The Second Week material follows the life of Jesus through imaginative contemplation of the gospel stories and some of Ignatius' unique exercises. In this way, the retreatant develops a closer relationship with Jesus, as well as deeper self-awareness. Ignatius also offered substantial material on discernment in this Week, which is a crucial element of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

From an ecofeminist perspective, the gospel contemplations, which invite a direct experience of Jesus through spiritual imagination, allow the retreatant to separate Jesus and his teaching from Christian religious doctrine (EF 12). However, other ecofeminist theological principles (especially addressing the andro- and anthropocentric perspective) can be explored, or at least invoked, by the choice of which gospel stories to include.[18] In the contemplation-heavy Second, Third, and Fourth Weeks, care was taken to choose scriptures that include female characters, including those in only the most minor of roles. This helped retreatants find the

[18] A listing of all scriptures used in the exercises is included in Appendix C.

women who are in the gospel stories, even if unnamed and peeking out from the corners of the text. Along with encouraging retreatants to have conversations (colloquies) with Mary or other women in the stories, this approach encouraged retreatants to separate the stories from the masculine voice of the written text, and to reframe and revision these scriptural stories from a feminine (and ecofeminist) perspective.

Exercise 14.4, which included contemplation of Mary's *Magnificat* from the Gospel of Luke, invited meditation on an image of Mary by contemporary printmaker Ben Wildflower.[19] It provides an interesting example of reflections generated by some of the added feminist material. The image, titled *Magnificat*, includes phrases from Mary's *Magnificat*: "cast down the mighty," "send the rich away," "fill the hungry," and "lift the lowly." Mary is depicted trampling on a snake, her hands in fists, one fist raised in the air in defiance and power. A couple of retreatants just did not like the image. One was led to reflect on her own position of power and privilege that would be cast down. Another reflected on the complexity of her appreciation of an image of a strong woman, while still feeling that it was somehow inappropriate for a woman to display what could be described as very aggressive male energy. Two retreatants were also inspired by the exercises of the week to rewrite the *Magnificat*, in healing and generative ways.

The adapted Exercises spend more time than is typical in the stories from Luke's gospel leading up to and including the Nativity, because of their focus on the strong female characters of Mary and Elizabeth. However, those stories pose interesting challenges. Several of the focus group retreatants had never given birth or raised children, and one had lost a child. Their lived experience sometimes made it difficult to enter these scriptures, as they contended with their grief or the feeling that their knowledge of pregnancy and childbirth was only theoretical, rather

[19] Ben Wildflower, *Magnificat*, digital print of a woodcut, 2016, https://benwildflower.com/products/magnificat-print.

than embodied. However, some of the retreatants who had birthed children appreciated the invitation to imaginatively linger with the scene of Jesus' birth that Luke just blows right by in his account. Others noticed a sense of awe and wonder.

The ecological aspect of ecofeminism was attended to in the scriptural contemplations of this and subsequent Weeks by inviting the retreatants to imaginatively enter the stories from the perspective of more-than-human characters, and to colloquy with sacred Others, defined as saints or other "holy people," ancestors, or any being of the more-than-human world. This invitation redefined the traditional Ignatian "Triple Colloquy," which applied to Jesus, Mary, and "the Father." The focus group retreatants were very receptive to this practice. Several specifically mentioned appreciating the opportunity to enter the stories from the perspective of animals, trees, or even other natural elements such as water imagined at the scenes, or to converse with them.

The exercises of Weeks 18 and 19, located in the center of these adapted Exercises, included significant added meditations from the ecofeminist perspective. In Week 18, these included reflections for context when reading the story of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, so that the river could become a key character in the story (18.1), immersion into the wild desert with Jesus (18.4), and The Kin-dom Meditation (18.5).

First, a structural change that was made to the Second Week exercises was to start with reflections on the meaning of incarnation, including Ignatius' Contemplation on the Incarnation, rather than Ignatius' Call of the King meditation (SE 91-100), also known as the Kingdom Meditation, that traditionally opens the Second Week of exercises. In the multi-part Kingdom Meditation, the retreatant brings to mind a powerful and benevolent king, notices the attraction they feel towards that earthly (or "temporal") king, and then transfers that attraction to the even more powerful and benevolent heavenly King. "Just as a temporal king could capture one's

heart, energy, and commitment, so the call of Christ the eternal King would elicit great desires to follow the way of discipleship and be transformed by entering a deeper and more intimate relationship."[20]

The imagery, language, and underlying theology of this meditation necessitated a complete revisioning to become the "Kin-dom Meditation" (18.5). "Kin-dom" is a term coined by Cuban-American theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz.[21] It transposes the imperial, hierarchical, and patriarchal model of the Divine/human relationship of "king" and "kingdom" into a something that reflects a more intimate, horizontal, and interconnected relationship consistent with ecofeminist theology (EF 1, 2, 3, 6). We are all kin—from the Old English meaning of the same kind: "Kindred, All. The earth and all that dwell herein—the rooted, feathered, furred, scaled—are relations, our dear kindred."[22]

The Contemplation on Incarnation that opens the Second Week in the adapted Exercises offers an experience of awe and wonder at the presence of Divine Love permeating all things (12.2-12.4). It broadens reflection on incarnation beyond "the" incarnation of God in Jesus. The Kin-dom Meditation then mirrors part of the earlier Contemplation on Incarnation, but with a different focus: The retreatant is invited into an experience of interconnection with all creation. Given this new focus, it is placed within the adapted Exercises where the narrative of Jesus' life sees him called into the wilderness and to his earthly ministry.[23]

Week 19, the second central week in these adapted Exercises, begins with contemplations of Jesus being tempted away from his call by the forces that draw us away from life, love, and

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[20] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 155.

[21] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha—In the Struggle: A Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), Kindle.

[22] Lyanda Lynn Haupt, *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2021), Kindle.

[23] O'Brien also starts the Second Week with the Contemplation on the Incarnation, and moves the Kingdom Meditation to a later, though different, place in the Second Week. O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 129, 153.

connection; in Ignatian terms, into desolation. Two added exercises in this week offer the retreatant opportunities to explore more deeply the interconnected web of relationships that is available for spiritual support. One exercise works to develop closer connections with the places we live, using the ancient concept of "kithship," drawing from the work of Lyanda Lynn Haupt.

> In modern English—even in England, where the expression originated—"kith and kin" are mistakenly conflated into one meaning: our relatives, those who are close to us. But the reason the archaic phrase was formed around two different words is that they are in fact different. . . . Where kin are relations of kind, kith is relationship based on knowledge of place—the close landscape . . . where each tree and neighbor and robin and fox and stone is known, not by map or guide but by heart. Kith is intimacy with a place, its landmarks, its fragrance, the habits of its wildlings. Kithship enlivens kinship.[24]

The second of the added exercises in Week 19 takes advantage of the fact that the Gospel of Luke places a genealogy of Jesus after his baptism and testing in the wilderness (Luke 3:23-38). The meditation, entitled "Ancestors," provides an opportunity for retreatants to write and reflect on their own genealogy in whatever way feels right for them, including with "ancestors" conceived of in very broad terms (19.3). "To recover our human experience is, in fact, to place ourselves within the tradition of our ancestors, of those whose bodies vibrated as ours do when they experienced the attractions and repulsions we ourselves undergo as we relate to so many different situations in our lives."[25]

In the latter half of the Second Week, we move into the material on Ignatian discernment. I made several major changes in the presentation of this material. The first was a complete revisioning of the Two Standards meditation (21.10-21.3), the problems with which (from an ecofeminist perspective) were discussed in Chapter 1. Rather than imagining two kings carrying

[24] Haupt, *Rooted*, 25-26.
[25] Gebara, *Longing For Running Water*, chap. 1.

their standards on opposite sides of a battlefield, I asked retreatants to imagine two songs, the Enemy's song and Christ's song, and then to think of a piece of music, image or story that can represent each song for them. Next, retreatants reflect on where they hear or have heard those songs playing in their own lives and in the world and consider what song they hear in different situations and when each song attracts them.

Another major change was to take Ignatius' annotations about discernment and the Election and turn them into exercises themselves.[26] Ignatius believed, as a man of his time would, that good and evil "spirits" operate within us, causing feelings of attraction or repulsion, desires and discontents. Naturally, that aspect of the Ignatian discernment material needed to be reframed. However, while modern psychology and neuroscience may give us different terminology and ways to understand these interior movements, Ignatius was describing a very real felt experience. The fundamental framework and tools provided by Ignatius for approaching discernment (the 3 ways or "times" of discernment) could remain intact. For Ignatius, God was our Helper, and "discernment is a tool through which God gives help."[27] But instead of just reading information about these tools, all retreatants had the opportunity to apply this approach to their own lived experience, through (1) remembering the ways they have made decisions in the past, (2) recognizing their deepest desires, and (3) considering how they could apply these tools to current decisions, large and small (23.2, 23.3, 23.5).[28] Additional aspects of Ignatian discernment were included in the Third Week.[29]

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[26] Two other Ignatian meditations related to discernment, The Three Classes of Persons (SE 149-164) and the Three Ways of Being Humble (SE 165-168), needed updating and a ecofeminist theological reworking, but remain largely intact. They appear in Week 22 (22.1, 22.4).

[27] O'Brien, class lecture, July 17, 2024.

[28] I took a similar approach to the Nuances of Discernment of Spirits material (SE 328-336). While Ignatius suggested this material was suitable for the Second Week, I follow O'Brien's lead in placing them in the Third Week of these adapted Exercises (27.5).

[29] Ignatian directors differ about whether only those facing a major life decision (Election) should make the *Exercises,* or how differently to offer a retreat depending on whether the retreatant is in the decision-making process.

Topics for the Second Week:[30]

Week 12 – Incarnation
Week 13 – Annunciation
Week 14 – Visitation
Week 15 – Nativity
Week 16 – Infancy
Week 17 – Growing Up
Week 18 – Call of the Kin-dom
Week 19 – Kith and Kin
Week 20 – Responding to the Call
Week 21 – Two Standards
Week 22 – Ways of Loving
Week 23 – What do you desire?
Week 24 – Gifts of Ministry
Week 25 – Healing
Week 26 – Second Week Review

The Third Week

The Third Week of the *Exercises* continues the walk with Jesus through gospel stories, accompanying Jesus all the way to the cross and the tomb. The retreatants carried into this time of increasing sorrow and suffering the relationships built and strengthened between them and Jesus, Mary, and sacred Others including ancestors, kith, and kin. Further, in the spiral way of the *Spiritual Exercises*, issues of sin, evil, incarnation, discernment and connection are brought up again by the exercises of this Week. In the Third Week we let the world in, let it break our hearts, get us angry, and "stir up bold and holy desires."[31] We are asked to come close to Jesus and stay present, even when it becomes difficult, as Jesus came close to us. "Love comes close and it does not run away."[32]

I take the position that we are always making choices, always in discernment about something, and that the same basic rules apply. I structured these Exercises so everyone making the retreat is introduced to and has a chance to work with the Ignatian discernment tools and approach.

[30] In 16.5 I also replaced the repeat of the magi story from Matthew, which was not proving fruitful for retreatants, and inserted a poem and switched songs in the closing. All other changes between versions of a given weeks' exercises were technical.

[31] O'Brien, class lecture, July 17, 2024.

[32] O'Brien, class lecture, July 17, 2024.

In these adapted Exercises, week 28 begins with two days of contemplation on the stories of the anointing of Jesus by a woman, taken from the gospels of Mark and John.[33] This allowed deep reflection on another story where a woman is a key participant. Moreover, this week is all about the body, providing opportunities to highlight the ecofeminist principle of embodiment (EF 7). The story of the woman anointing Jesus, especially as told in the Gospel of John, is full of sensory cues. Retreatants were instructed to increase their embodied experience of the story by having available things like nice smelling soap, shampoo, or perfume (28.1, 28.2). Next, retreatants worked with the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet from the gospel of John and were invited to do a foot washing ritual of their own (28.3). Then, for the last supper story the suggestion is to have something to eat and drink as they contemplate an image of that meal that includes women (28.4).

The use of physical sensory input for contemplation and meditation, as well as the imaginal application of the senses, continued in the Garden of Gethsemane exercises in week 29. Retreatants were invited to do that week's exercises outside at night, or to go outside soon afterwards, and to have a small bowl of olive oil (or some olives) nearby to add that aroma. That week also included an additional meditation, A Minyan of Trees, adapted from Rabbi Yael Levy. In it, retreatants were invited to find ten trees (or shrubs or rocks) to serve as their *minyan* and then to pray with them (29.3).

After meeting with the group of four retreatants on weeks 29 and 30, I felt it was important to add something to the introduction to week 30 (Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion) for the other four retreatants:

> These are difficult stories. Do whatever you need to remain grounded so that you can remain present to Jesus in his suffering. Notice, with curiosity not judgment,

[33] The accounts in Matthew and Mark are substantially similar, so I did not add Matthew's account. Luke's version of this story was used in the First Week.

> any places of resistance so that you can come back and explore that later. Remember that you can enter the story in whatever way feels appropriate for you, including as a witness rather than an active participant.

Each of the women in the group had difficulty putting themselves in the scriptural stories, for various reasons, and some seemed to be judging themselves negatively for that. Since the stories for contemplation would only get more difficult in the next two weeks, I felt it was important to stress staying grounded and present and noticing what was happening within themselves. It is all information for reflection, not judgment. Later retreatants seemed better able to do this, some mentioning that the musical elements helped that process. A couple of retreatants thought that these exercises provided valuable tools for weathering difficult times in their lives.

The next major change was in week 31. In addition to contemplation of scriptural passages telling the story of Jesus' crucifixion, three exercises were added involving meditation on images of the suffering, death, indeed crucifixion, of other human and more-than-human beings. An important aspect of this Week is the recognition and experience of how the crucifixion of Jesus did not just happen more than 2000 years ago, it is happening right now to people and to the planet and all who make it home. The first exercise is a set of Crista images, where women are depicted on a cross as the Christ is usually depicted (31.3). The second offered an image of a pelican in the water, covered in oil from an oil spill, wings out spread as if on a cross (31.4). The third offered a series of images of lynchings (31.5). The intent was to graphically connect the oppression of women, BIPOC people, and the environment, and to bring that suffering home to the retreatants. These meditations were clearly labelled so there would be no surprises and they were surrounded by other exercises to help retreatants stay grounded and in their bodies. They were also advised to notice their reactions without judgment. Indeed, as a result of the retreatants' experience with week 30, I added even more grounding exercises in

week 31 than I had originally planned, which seemed to be effective. Some of the retreatants reported that they were able to sit with each of the images, others consciously elected not to view or sit with one of the images, and one decided she needed to skip them all but chose instead to read James Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* during this week. One retreatant commented: "I had a very hard time with the images of lynching and suffering, although they served me in the work of transformation." Another reflected on the judgment they felt towards themselves for being more impacted by the image of the oil-slicked bird than by the human suffering.

The last change to the Third Week exercises was not really based on the basic ecofeminist principles, except in that it was grounded in my own lived experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*. After contemplation of Jesus being placed in the tomb, the recommendation for most of this week was to stop doing and just to be in that liminal space using contemplative silence, walking, listening to soft music, or quiet reflection. Though this is the last week of the Third Week phase of these Exercises, there was no review of the Third Week, by design. In my experience there needs to be space here, a "Holy Saturday" time to allow the experiences of the Third Week to sink in before trying to reflect on all of what this Week offered to the retreatants. Ignatian director Susan Stabile was once told: "Stay with the tomb experience until you feel in yourself the stirrings of resurrection,"[34] which is excellent guidance. A review of the Third Week is included in the final review at the end of the whole retreat.

The topics for the Third Week:

Week 27 – Jerusalem
Week 28 – The Last Supper
Week 29 – Jesus in the Garden
Week 30 – Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion
Week 31 – Dying

[34] Stabile, "Directing the Extended Ignatian Exercises," March 23, 2022.

Week 32 – Tomb

The Fourth Week

The Fourth and final Week of the Exercises is about resurrection, naturally, but also about the consequences of resurrection for us and all creation. Perhaps most importantly, it is about how we will choose to show up in the world, having had this retreat experience. The retreatant moves from a spiritual posture of making the Exercises to living and embodying them.

This Week begins, in both the original and these adapted Exercises, with what is perhaps the most amazing contemplation in the whole retreat, the Contemplation on Mary, Mother of Jesus (SE 299). Ignatius instructed the retreatant to imagine that the first person the risen Jesus appeared to was his mother and to place themselves in that story. There is no better evidence that an adaptation of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* from an ecofeminist perspective is in keeping with Ignatius' original intent. All I needed to do was set up the exercise in a way consistent with the rest of the retreat (32.2). No reframing was required.

The Fourth Week continued with contemplation of various post-resurrection appearances by Jesus, concluding the scriptural exercises with the Pentecost story from the second chapter of the book of Acts. This last is a departure from the original *Spiritual Exercises* which end with the Ascension of Christ from the first chapter of the book of Acts (SE 312). I substituted Pentecost for the Ascension because the latter is very theologically fraught for many, particularly Protestants, and reflects a worldview inconsistent with the stance taken in the rest of these Exercises. I also felt that Pentecost, with its momentum out into the world, empowered by the fire of the Spirit, was a better place to conclude the scriptural exercises, as the momentum of the retreat is also outwards to, in Ignatius' words, "set the world on fire."

All that remained for the retreat proper was the *Contemplatio*, also known as the Contemplation on Divine Love, or the Contemplation to Attain Love (SE 230-237). This is an extended multi-part exercise that Ignatius placed at the end of his written *Spiritual Exercises*, withous giving guidance as to where exactly he intended for it to be used. Most directors chose to place it at the end, others offer pieces of it throughout the retreat. In keeping with my approach throughout the adapted Exercises, I expanded on this (already lengthy) contemplation, adding detailed instructions and spreading it out over two full weeks. I probably could have given it three. This was a way to spiral back to a lot of important themes explored in the retreat, particularly those connected to the Basic Ecofeminist Principles. A change I made to the *Contemplatio* after meeting with a few focus group retreatants during the field test was to add colloquies to those exercises. It felt important to keep the relationships built in the retreat going during this time.

Two other changes that I made to the Fourth Week material based on the focus group experience are worth noting. First is the addition in the introduction to week 33 of information shared by one of the retreatants about scholarship relating to the translation of Mark 16:8, which places the women in the story in a much more favorable light and reflects on the androcentric, patriarchal translation and interpretation of scripture:

> Also, scholar Marie Noonan Sabin argues that the word in Mark 16:8 typically translated as 'afraid' should more appropriately be translated as 'awe' or 'holy ecstasy,' which is how it is translated when it describes the reaction of men in other places in the Gospel of Mark. Being speechless is a natural reaction to being awestruck.

The second change was an addition to the instructions for the week 38 review to emphasize that retreatants should read only the reviews at the end of the first three (capital "W") Weeks, not all of the material in their retreat journals, so that they might feel less overwhelmed.

The Third and Fourth Weeks would still be reviewed in their entirety as they had not been reviewed before. My original intent for this review was for it to be a simple read through of the retreat journals, looking for what stood out and then working with that. It was not meant to be an in-depth contemplation of the entire retreat, but a way to provide tools that could be used to continue the work after the retreat was over and to bring a sense of completion and affirmation. However, one retreatant still felt overwhelmed and reported being stuck back in the first part of the retreat. Spreading the review out over two weeks seemed like too long at the end of the retreat, and after the lengthy *Contemplatio*, but it is worth further discernment.

The topics for the Fourth Week are:

Week 33 – Dawn
Week 34 – Resurrection
Week 35 – Sending
Week 36 – *Contemplatio*
Week 37 – God in All Things
Week 38 – Contemplatives in Action

Chapter 5

Findings and Conclusions

When we begin to imagine a different world, a different societal structure,
a different way of relating to the divine and ourselves,
we can find creative and subversive ways to question and resist oppression.
— Kat Armas[1]

This chapter will review the data collected during the research phase of this project and discuss findings from the research, including conclusions that can be drawn from the data, the limitations of the project, and recommendations for use of these adapted Spiritual Exercises by spiritual directors. The findings will be considered as they relate to three evaluative questions: (1) Was the material presented in the retreat effective in guiding retreatants through the dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises*? (2) Did the retreat deepen retreatants' understanding of and engagement with the basic ecofeminist principles applied? (3) What was the retreatants' experience of the retreat?

Was the material presented in the retreat effective in guiding participants through the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises?

For this question I looked at the progress of each retreatant through the retreat to assess whether the adapted Exercises provided an experience of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* consistent with the vision of Ignatius. As noted by Cline, "we are not trying to invent something new when we adapt the *Exercises* for retreatants. Rather, we are attempting to facilitate a meaningful experience with the *Exercises*. The entire point of adaptation is to allow individuals to experience the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola—the same *Exercises* that have guided and transformed the lives of so many individuals, from so many different cultures and times

[1] Armas, *Abuelita Faith*, 181.

throughout history."[2] After reviewing my general findings related to this question, I will present an illustrative case study of one retreatant.

Dynamics of the Exercises

Ignatius designed each Week, or phase, of the *Spiritual Exercises* to give retreatants the opportunity for certain types of experiences and to elicit certain responses based on those experiences. There is a recognized movement as one progresses through the retreat, often called the "dynamics" of the *Spiritual Exercises*.[3] During the spiritual direction sessions, the one giving the *Exercises* listens to what the retreatant reports they are experiencing, keeping in mind the dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and then discerns whether the retreatant is ready to move to the next phase or what exercises would be helpful to allow the retreatant to move deeper in their experience.[4]

My review and analysis of the data showed that all seven of the focus-group retreatants who completed the full retreat progressed through the retreat essentially as expected from week to week, based on accepted guidelines. Some took longer in certain parts of the Exercises than others or engaged more deeply in some parts more than others, but that is to be expected.

This highlights a limitation of doing the *Spiritual Exercises* in a group format: It is not unusual that the members in a group would not all be in the same place internally as they moved through the retreat together. However, the group cannot stop and wait for every member to be ready before moving to the next week or Week of the *Exercises.* There were occasions with each of the women in the field test direction group where, had I been working with them one-on-one, I would have had a member of the group linger for a while rather than move forward. However,

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[2] Cline, *A World on Fire*, chap. 2.
[3] Fleming, *Like the Lightning*, 16.
[4] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 47-48.

that was not an option because they were going through the retreat together with the other members of the group. The group had to be able to be flexible enough to allow individuals to bring whatever they were processing in the *Exercises* to each group session, even if not from the "assigned" exercises for that week, without negatively judging them for being "behind." Alternatively, the individual had to be willing to adapt to the pace of the group.

Sometimes both dynamics were present during the field test: The group retreatants often held individual members who were still working with material from earlier weeks. One group member's life developed in such a way during the field test that she was unable to fully engage with the *Exercises* as she had hoped. Yet she still joined the group direction sessions whenever possible and brought what she was working on at the time. Sometimes that was the material provided for that session, sometimes it was material from earlier parts of the adapted Exercises. Each of the other three group members, however, progressed to each phase of the Exercises as expected, even if sometimes it was a little later than the others in the group.

Preparation Weeks. By the end of this phase of the Exercises, the retreatant hopefully will have developed a regular pattern of daily prayer and will be expressing an experience of God's love or gratitude for the giving and receiving of life and love. The director also listens for a movement towards spiritual freedom, a willingness to explore, expressions of delight, and evidence of a generosity of spirit.

As an example, one retreatant described experiencing God as a feeling of connectedness and an opening up to more creativity than she had felt in a long time. She described noticing her blessings more concretely and evinced a strong desire to move to the next phase of the Exercises. She noticed some unfreedom and resistance in herself but was willing to explore that further.

First Week. In this phase of the Exercises, the retreatant explores the concept of "sin" and has a graced awareness of that in their own lives. I was listening for a radical honesty about themselves but with indications that they could still see themselves as loved by God. This is also where I introduced the colloquy, so I considered the retreatants' experience of that practice.

For example, one retreatant reported that these First Week exercises were very challenging and were "stirring up lots of stuff," but she found comfort in the colloquies with Jesus, which she usually had while working in her garden. Another needed extra time in the First Week, but eventually was able to name the grace and gift in difficult spaces of her life and described a sense of peace. In a similar vein, another retreatant expressed how hard it was to invite God into places where she had felt guilt or shame, but described gaining great comfort from the Psalm 23.

Perhaps the most powerful insight expressed during the First Week was from a retreatant who came to realize that all the times she identified as places of guilt or shame in her life were time when she had been angry. The shame she felt was not about the underlying incident but about her feeling or expression of anger. She recognized this as a significant area of unfreedom for her. However, throughout this reflection she had the image of being held in very large hands.

Second Week. As retreatants journey alongside Jesus through his life and ministry, they engage the gospel stories with imagination. I listened for signs of a growing facility with imaginative prayer and for a deeper, more personal and intimate relationship with Jesus. Further, I was listening for a basic understanding of Ignatian discernment and an openness to being led by the Spirit.

One retreatant displayed an increased willingness to directly challenge Jesus when she felt there was an injustice, for example when Jesus' delay in answering their summons was hurtful to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Similarly, when the boat the disciples were in was tossed in the storm

and Jesus was sleeping, the retreatant cried out to him, “Don’t you care?” But through all the struggle with what she called “the incredible oddness of these scripture stories,” she came to realize that “God is much messier and odder than our theology,” and that “when you are in a place of trust” in God “there is no death.”

Another retreatant said, “I’m liking Jesus more each day.” Yet another reflected, “Jesus seems like a person now, like I am.” One retreatant struggled with speaking with Jesus until Week 20, when she felt Jesus became more “approachable.” She realized she had a lot of anger towards God, and needed a tangible God she could yell at and punch. But, she noted, “you can’t punch mystery.” She was able to recall a moment, after her son died, when she was driving and Jesus was in the car with her, very real and solid, and weeping. It was comforting. However, she felt she could not hold onto that experience, even though the memory itself seemed to continue to bring her comfort. She clearly wanted Jesus to be that solid comforter for her and was moving in that direction.

Several retreatants expressed a sense of opening during the Second Week, of standing on the threshold of something new. At the close of the Second Week, some were able to look back and see how far they had travelled. Even those who still sometimes struggled with the contemplations or colloquies also described truly amazing encounters through them as they heard Jesus respond to their deepest questions. For example, one retreatant often conversed with Jesus about what was happening at her workplace. She felt Jesus affirm her call to that work. When she asked him, “Why me?” she heard Jesus respond, “My ways are not your ways.” Then she asked for his help and he replied, “Remember who you are and whose you are.” This was a very tender experience for her.

Third Week. In this phase of the Exercises the retreatant is asked to stay present with Jesus through his suffering, not only in the gospel stories but in examples of suffering that has happened and continues to happen in the larger world. I was listening for the retreatants' willingness to engage with their own suffering or grief, as well as for a compassionate movement beyond the retreatant's own concerns.

Several of the retreatants expressed that they felt they were living out these Passion stories in their own lives, either because of personal situations or because of what they were seeing on the news. For some, this made it easier to engage these exercises. Several described a powerful experience of just sitting and holding Jesus' hand, as there was nothing else they could do. One felt a call to lamentation, not only for Jesus but for her own family, and she was able to see Jesus in those she works with.

For others, the synchronicity made it more difficult, more painful, or more discouraging, because the same story continues to be played out over and over through time. One related the Third Week to the experience of walking with friends who are dying. "Doing that with Jesus will make Lent much harder and more meaningful." On the other hand, another retreatant expressed that the experience of these exercises, staying with the suffering but not being weighed down by it, helped her move through her own life at that time.

One retreatant saw a pattern of all the love shown to Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. She thought that "maybe all those experiences of love made the rest of the Passion possible," that it was consolation for Jesus that he could carry with him into the hard times. This led her to ask herself, "What is it I want or need to give for love?"

Fourth Week. In this phase of the Exercises, I was listening for a willingness to rise with Christ rather than staying stuck in the tomb. This could involve expressions of joy or gratitude, a

sense of spiritual freedom, or recognition of a kind of transformation, and a vision that moves beyond themselves out into the world.

One retreatant expressed the difficulty with resurrection for her. She realized that it is not necessarily a sudden blossoming but can be "a long slow process that comes in little pieces." She reflected: "I don't emerge from the resurrection texts with joy but relief, with space opened up in my heart so I can breathe, which is a different place from other years."

One retreatant said that she had not "gotten to resurrection yet," and "may never get to the resurrection," because in the real world it still felt like crucifixion. And yet, she also expressed "a certain lightness that comes with being able to reimagine" these stories in different ways. "There is a freedom," she said, "in that that is interesting. It's an ongoing process."

Similarly, another retreatant described resurrection as "a new way of seeing." It is "not always visible," she said, "you have to look for it." She and several others expressed the realization that for resurrection to happen for them they had to let go of trying to control things so closely. One described how this led her to show up in the world this way:

> *Act, don't React!*
> *The only way to be in the world is*
> *LOVING!*

And another was led to recognize that her purpose in life is " to create moments of spiritual connection and help repair the tear in the fabric of the universe." Amen.

Case Study – Cara[5]

Following one retreatant through some of the highlights of her experience in the retreat illustrates the flow of the adapted Exercises and how she experienced the retreat. This retreatant, who I will call Cara, already had a robust prayer practice prior to making the retreat and expressed

[5] "Cara" is a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality, pursuant to my IRB protocol.

that she experienced the Divine mostly in nature. She prefered feminine words for God such as "Holy Mother," and saw in animals the face of God. Her hopes for the retreat were to "take Jesus out of the church," to better know him, and his mother, Mary, and to know and understand herself from a Divine perspective. She reported having been "vexed" by Jesus since she "was old enough to reason."

Preparation Weeks. This phase was characterized for Cara by the question: "What would happen if I remained curious about the Divine?" While she had a hard time thinking about her earliest experience of love, she was able to describe experiencing the presence of the Holy and had "no hesitation feeling loved by the Source." She began to identify a developing relationship with God based on her heart not her head. "I want to shed dogma. Dogma comes from old white men and from a place of power and privilege. It is hard to shake that loose. It's scary, but freeing." She described that what had caused this shift in her "was the experience of God as love."

First Week. During the First Week, a key element for Cara was the reframing and rewriting of the Garden of Eden story in Genesis. She saw the snake as the women's inner wisdom so that by picking the fruit the woman was "claiming her female power." At the same time, in the process of reframing this story Cara claimed her own inner wisdom and agency in interacting with scripture using imagination, which would continue to develop over the course of the retreat.

Resonating strongly with the ecofeminist framing of "sin" as a rupture of relationship, Cara began to explore the difficult relationships she has had with her mother and sister in this light, while recognizing that it is a long and difficult process. Cara reflected deeply on her unwillingness to forgive herself and on how she could become free of shame and guilt. "I can step above it and have a clean slate, but I'm not sure that I 'should' have one. I perpetuate my own

shame and guilt because I don't feel worthy." She also identified that letting go of her anger at her family is a question of spiritual freedom. She said, "I might actually be able to let go some things—not everything." Cara also began to shift her focus from herself to the wider community. She recognized that holding onto her shame and guilt over her individual sin relieved her from seeing and addressing her involvement with systemic sin and injustice.

Cara had a significant breakthrough during her contemplation of the story of the anointing of Jesus (Luke 7:36-50). Imagining herself in the place of the woman, she felt Jesus lift her head and say to her, "Stop this, just stop this." In colloquy with Jesus during this contemplation, she heard Jesus tell her to "stop wallowing in your sin and invite God into your sin." She reflected on Jesus as "the one who lifts our head" and on how we lift each other to a place of dignity.

Second Week. The Second Week brought Cara an opportunity to connect with women in scripture through the contemplations and colloquies. She had "great conversations" with the women, which she found helpful for her spiritual development. As a result of some difficult work with Mary, the mother of Jesus, she rewrote the traditional "Hail Mary" prayer. She described it as saying "hail" to the "Mary in me."

> *Hail Mary,*
> *Woman unto herself,*
> *Choice is with you.*
> *Blessed are you, Soul Mother,*
> *And blessed is the incarnation*
> *Of your womb.*
> *Whole Mary, Bearer of God,*
> *Be with us now,*
> *And in the hour of our birthing.*
> *Amen.*

In colloquy, she heard Mary say to her, "I am the story of every person who awakens to the incarnation."

Cara repeatedly expressed that she would never have expected what she heard in her colloquies. This was how she knew "this imaginative work is more than me making things up." However, she also struggled throughout the retreat with what she came to identify as the "old tapes" of her life and religious dogma. She wrestled with feelings that she was "unclaimable, even by God." This impacted her ability, as a church pastor, to preach with authority and a prophetic voice. "If no one has claimed you, you have no authority."

The Second Week also showed how deeply Cara internalized a connection to the more than human world. One example was the way in which she engaged with the Kin-dom Meditation. She was resistant at first, remembering a time when her mother told her that she "was not planned for," which left Cara feeling unwanted and unwelcome. But through the meditation she connected with the three oak trees in her back yard and heard from the trees: "You were planned for. We, the universe, planned for you. You are our family. You are welcome."

Later, when naming her ancestors, the genealogy she created included the deep forest and a family of foxes. She also began regularly to colloquy with a sheep as a sacred Other. She sent me a photograph of a sheep gazing at her that she was praying with. This is that picture (Figure).

Figure. Sacred sheep. *Source*: Public domain.

As part of the Two Standards meditation Cara did a Triple Colloquy, asking Mary, Jesus, and the sheep how she could harmonize the Enemy's Song and the Christ Song. From Mary she heard: "Be gentle with the Enemy Song." From Jesus she heard: "Love the Enemy Song and sing the Christ Song." From the sheep she heard: "In silence and in a deep tender and curious gaze." In another colloquy with the sheep she heard, "God validated you the day you were conceived. Remember your name." She had to look up the meaning of her name, which she discovered means "beloved."

A key moment in the Second Week for Cara came in a colloquy with Jesus. She heard Jesus say that biological family can be hard but that "we" can surround ourselves with non-biological family. She realized for the first time that Mary may not have been a perfect mother. The idea that Jesus was the child of a less than perfect mother, as was she, gave Cara a deeper connection with him. This felt like a turning point in her developing friendship with Jesus. Later, she would briefly question the ramifications of becoming "friends" with Jesus, wondering if it was "hokey and nonsensical, like 'Jesus is my BFF,' or an 'imaginary friend.'" However, she came to recognize that this was "a connection over space and time with wisdom that not only uplifts but guides and challenges" her and "may have helped erase some of those old tapes."

Her colloquies with Jesus began to deepen as she discovered that Jesus was curious about what she had to say. She "heard the words of Jesus as a brother." Through contemplation of the story of Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman she recognized an "inner voice of loving" and began to feel that she could forgive herself "for being human." She heard Jesus say to her, "this is hard work, I will not judge you for what I myself had to learn."

As the Second Week wound down, Cara reported a new and deepening appreciation for the sacred biblical text. "It is flawed and male dominant, but we can retell the stories from a place

of consolation." She also recognized how Jesus reframed scripture and so felt affirmed in her own reframing. The review at the end of the Second Week was good, but "a lot of work." However, she realized that she was in a "different place" than she had been in before.

Third Week. This Week saw an even deeper friendship developing between Cara and Jesus and a greater openness and noticeable gentleness to Cara. In a colloquy with Jesus, she heard him say to her: "It's difficult to be disinherited by your own people. You would know something about that." Then he asked her, "Do you accept me? Can you call me friend? Can you call me family." She responded, "Yes," but felt humbled that he would ask her for refuge. She realized that this was what it would mean to stay with Jesus in his suffering. In her imagination, Jesus leaned up against her and said to her, "Here is my mother, here is my sister." This was unexpected and foreign to her, and she could see his wisdom and his utter vulnerability. She spoke about what a "hard place this is to grow into." Jesus' vulnerability invited her to "revisit relationships I thought I could write off."

Reflecting on the old tapes of Christian theology and doctrine, she realized that "Christians are led to feel guilty about the death of Jesus. But if you enter these scenes as his companion, you get a different perspective." For example, she felt a strong desire to protect Jesus, like the mother hen wrapping her small body around her chicks, but there was nothing she could do but be with him. She began to identify Jesus with her own son, who was about the same age Jesus would have been when he went to the cross. She asked Jesus, "What do you want me to do?" Jesus replied, "Just stay here with me." She felt helpless, which called her back to her own life, and the things she has done of which she had felt ashamed. "These things happened and I can't change them. I just need to accept them and move on to resurrection."

Cara named the last weeks of the Third Week as "very important" for her development. She said to me, "I don't know whether to thank you or shake my finger at you for calling me into friendship with this young man, who I was sitting with through death and the tension of Holy Saturday. I hope to see that young man in the resurrection, not the 'cosmic Christ.'" She reported "seeing myself drawn into this relationship and the shift in me, me who has spent my whole career in ministry saying, 'what am I supposed to do with Jesus' to now saying, 'this man is my friend.' This is life changing and spirit changing; ground of my being changing."

The Third Week concluded for Cara with an imaginal experience that encapsulated the change in her relationship with Jesus, and through Jesus, God. She had a prayer vision that reframed an impactful dream from earlier in her life. In the dream there was a room with light streaming in through holes in the roof. Jesus was in the center of the room surrounded by people. When she went towards Jesus, he looked at her with a blank expression and she realized that he did not know her. In her new vision, she returned to that dream room, but this time when Jesus saw her he jumped up, ran to her, threw his arms around her, hugged her, then turned to the crowd and said, "I want to introduce you to my friend," calling her by name. She realized that she "didn't want to be spoon fed about Jesus," as she had been all her life; she "wanted to really know him. It feels like joy, coming home to a place I've never been. It is an invitation to stop struggling with" herself. She said, "I've lived in my head for so long, but 'you are my friend,' is coming from a completely different place." She said it felt like resurrection for her, a clear sign it was time to move into the Fourth Week.

Fourth Week. In the Fourth Week, Cara reported that, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, she had "had this experience of the Risen One, and it makes me want to rush to my community and say, 'we've been missing something.'" She recognized that her "friendship with

Jesus changes her relationship with the text, with the church, and also with" herself, as well as her relationship to nature, her family, and her human friends. In her church she "threw the lectionary out the window and preached from the resurrection stories." She also reported discovering the importance of play, because she had taken herself "so seriously for most" of her life. This too was a kind of resurrection.

She closed her retreat with questions that she will carry with her and that show the transformation in her. "What would it be like if I saw my mother as God? Or as Jesus?" She began to try that approach and reported it was changing her relationship with her mother, recognizing that "this too is God struggling to be in the world."

She began to feel called to broaden her engagement with the wider community by offering retreats for women. She said she knew that "what I've been learning is not just for my benefit." Her friendship with Jesus and engagement with the Ignatian discernment tools led her "to understand vocation differently and to offer something different" to the world. She mused about "how the people closest to Jesus didn't recognize him. Our own resurrection may make us unrecognizable and unacceptable to those who know us," after all, we've been through something "transformative."

Did the retreat deepen retreatants' understanding of and engagement with the basic ecofeminist principles applied?

For this question, I looked at whether and how the retreatants internalized the Basic Ecofeminist Principles applied in these adapted Exercises. The goal of this project was not just to create an adaptation that was more accessible to contemporary retreatants, but also to explore and deepen into a more feminist and ecological spirituality.

All of the retreatants in the field test focus group came with an interest in ecofeminism, and for some ecology was already a key aspect of their theology and spirituality. So, it was not

surprising that elements of the ecofeminist principles came up often in what they shared as they went through the retreat. The retreatants repeatedly mentioned how important it was for them to have the opportunity, the "permission," and even the encouragement to revision, reframe, or rewrite the scriptural texts from an ecofeminist perspective. This most often involved reframing what one retreatant described as "taking out the voice of the men who wrote" the scriptures, but sometimes also involved looking at the story from the eyes of the more-than-human world. In the process, the retreatants forged deeper connections to themselves as women, to nature, to the scripture text of their faith, to Jesus, and through all of this, to God. This was made possible through the combination of Ignatian contemplation, ecofeminist revisioning, and entering the story from a nonhuman perspective, a process several described as liberating.

It is interesting to note how often even the most liberal, spiritual, and ecologically aware of the focus group retreatants struggled sometimes with what two of them called "old tapes" of male and human centered theology and scriptural interpretation. It is hard to let go of ideas that have been drilled into you all your life. Freedom from that may have been the most important aspect of spiritual freedom these focus group retreatants experienced.

> I think I will never hear the stories the same way again – at first it bothered me, but now I feel confident enough and beloved enough to love the stories without having to say it can't be true. It's "True" and that's enough.

This was confirmed by other retreatants. The use of Ignatian contemplation, combined with the ecofeminist perspective offered from a variety of female voices, seems to have been the most transformative aspect of this retreat for the focus group retreatants.

> I have longed for a new way to hear the text, but I was not expecting this "new way" to be offered through the exercises. That is not a reflection on the selected passages or the way they were presented in the exercises. It is rather a reflection of my resistance due to frustration with popular translations. But I experienced Spirit leading me, plying me to seek what I was hoping to find, old stories told in a revolutionary and transformative way. I was not disappointed!

Many, but not all, of the retreatants engaged deeply with the idea of embodiment. One reflected: "I have a sense of God in my own skin. I do not necessarily mean this as incarnation. It's more like God holds me, swaddles me and I cannot be removed from that protective embrace." Others often mentioned dancing to the music suggested, a practice that allowed them to experience the retreat in their bodies in a creative way, or doing the exercises while walking on the beach or on a labyrinth.

The kin and kith meditations were also very fruitful for several of the focus group retreatants. They described the experience of these meditations as affirming and as helping them reconnect with the land and all beings who live (and have lived) on it. A couple continued to work with the concept of kith for several weeks, including wrestling with what being connected to land means when one has had to live so many different places in their lives.

The response to the revisioned Two Standards meditation (21.1-21.3) among the focus group retreatants was very powerful. For example, while one retreatant was working with this meditation, reflecting on what pulls her away from Christ's song, she "got a 'gift' – like a window opening – a small moment of realization that with God there are no 'shoulds.'" She reflected that growing up in the South there were a lot of "shoulds and shouldn'ts," particularly for women. But in the course of this meditation she realized that "if there aren't any shoulds then there is just love."

Another retreatant identified the song of birds, particularly in early morning, as Christ's song. "The song of Christ as embodied in nature." By contrast, she heard the Enemy song all around her in sirens, horns and similar sounds. She realized that when she walked into work she was walking into "the world of the Enemy song."

Some retreatants also mentioned feeling affirmed in this process, particularly in their spiritual connection to the more-than-human world, which is not often validated in other contexts. One retreatant said there was nothing new about the ecofeminist perspective for her, but she experienced in the retreat "a sense of relief when talking to those who don't think I'm crazy when I talk to a plant." Another expressed something similar: "In the retreat, I found a place where my relationship with the natural world was not only accepted but celebrated." Another who already had a strong spiritual connection to the environment "appreciated being able to incorporate this aspect of God's nature into the prayer times." Similarly, another said, "I loved having the option of entering the scripture in ways other than human." And one summed up this aspect of the project this way in their closing questionnaire:

> I have discovered, through ecofeminism, a greater awareness and knowledge of place, and how profoundly that shapes me and the world; as well as how much God can be manifest in physical place. Prior to this, I have always thought of the physical wind as the breath of God, the Spirit, and that continues to be an important physical reminder of God to me - it was especially so when I was walking the Camino. I also have a new feminist paradigm of thinking of sin - and looking at Scripture and the world - from the perspective of broken relationships.

Perhaps no comment from a retreatant better expressed that the retreat functioned as intended than this quote from another retreatant's closing questionnaire:

> My favorite aspect of the retreat was the opportunity to reflect with a guide and also the many opportunities to reflect through the eco-feminist lens. . . . My understanding of my relationship to the natural world came to include my relationship to the divine—All of the ways we considered the natural world during the weeks—brought the gospels to life—and helped me see that the damage we do to the environment represents the damage of our relationship to God.

It was not surprising that those who were inspired to field test an ecofeminist adaptation of the *Spiritual Exercises* were those who had already engaged with aspects of feminist

hermeneutics and/or ecospirituality and who already had relatively liberal operative theology themselves (even if some of them worshiped in or served churches with more conservative theology). However, the make-up of this focus group meant that I could not evaluate how these adapted Exercises would impact a retreatant with more traditional or conservative Christian theology and spirituality. Indeed, I would caution spiritual directors to discern carefully what aspects of this retreat would be appropriate for such a retreatant, and to introduce these principles to them incrementally over the course of the retreat. It could start, once the retreatant was familiar and comfortable with Ignatian contemplation, with suggesting that they enter the scriptural story from the perspective of a tree or a bird, then colloquy with Jesus and see what happens. However, that is always the director's role in any Ignatian retreat, to discern what is needed for a given retreatant and adapt the retreat for their needs.

What was the retreatants' experience of the retreat?

This question looked at the retreatants' overall experience going through the adapted Exercises in the field test. Did they feel changed by the experience, and if so, in what way? What will stay with them from the experience? I also looked at what worked for them, or did not, with an emphasis on the adaptations I made rather than the traditional elements of the *Spiritual Exercises*.[6] For this I focused primarily on their reflection back on the experience in their closing questionnaires.

[6] For example, some retreatants struggled to engage in a daily Examen or in the colloquies with Jesus, which are traditional elements of the retreat. However, that does not speak to the changes made to incorporate the ecofeminist perspective. I will note in this context that only a couple of the retreatants reported accepting the invitation to engage in colloquies with sacred Others. If the other retreatants did so, it was not powerful enough an encounter for them to mention in our sessions. As a director, I often ask if retreatants are engaging in the colloquies and daily Examen. In retrospect, I wish I had specifically asked about who they were conversing with in their colloquies and what, if any, resistance they might have to engaging sacred Others. That is specific guidance I can offer spiritual directors who use these adapted Exercises.

Closing Questionnaire

All retreatants were provided with a Closing Questionnaire.[7] All the retreatants who completed the retreat either returned the questionnaire to me or answered the questions as part of a closing interview. The following is a question-by-question summary of responses. In addition to questions about their experience as retreatants, the closing questionnaire also included questions about their experience as spiritual directors.

1. Describe how you approached these daily exercises. For example, were you able to make them a daily habit? What time of day worked for you? Did you do the daily exercises in order or did you pick and choose? Did any of this change over the course of the retreat? The responses to this question reflected that even those who did not start the retreat with a regular prayer practice found a rhythm that worked for them. One retreatant noted: "I felt better when I could do them every day at the same time. As the weeks progressed, this felt like an important part of my routine and a healthy way to begin the day." Most, however, found that they were unable to do the exercises every day and ended up using the repetition days to catch up. As one retreatant noted, "daily life demands got in the way of being consistent." Another found she had to aim for doing the exercises 3-4 days a week, others that they missed at least one day. However, either by spending longer on the days they could pray with the exercises or by using the repetition days to catch up, most retreatants did end up working with the bulk of the material.

Several retreatants described their struggle with feeling that they "should" do all the exercises provided for the week in a certain way or in certain order, despite repeated assurances that this was not expected (or even desirable). Most, however, were able to let go of that perceived need to do the retreat "right," which was an encouraging sign of increased spiritual

[7] The Closing Questionnaire is attached as Appendix D.

freedom. One retreatant noticed that she "was very 'good' at the beginning, trying to do everything in order, then got freer and freer." Another described how she tried out different schedules for the exercises and the daily Examen, eventually settling on what worked best for her, which was usually "the exercise in the morning and the Examen in the evening." However, she noted that there were some exceptions to this: "On occasion I wanted to ponder the exercise throughout the day before I responded to it in my journal in the evening."

One retreatant reflected that she really needed much more time to pray with the daily exercises.

> There was so much content, all good of course, but it often didn't feel like a week was long enough to really go deep with it in order to get the most out of the exercises. I really needed several hours at a time. I needed quiet time first, then a reading of the material for that day, then time for pondering, then time for researching images and background content to help me get into the scripture stories and then eventually the colloquy. All that to say, I could have easily spread these exercises out over two years.

This retreatant comprehensively engaged the material. She brilliantly took the variety of resources provided as an invitation to expand on them even more. When the supplemental material or resources provided, such as images or music, did not resonate with her, she researched on the internet and found ones that did and prayed with those instead. This became an important part of her process of making the retreat. It did, however, significantly increase the time she worked with the material for a given day in a way that would not be an issue with a more traditional format of the *Spiritual Exercises*. This, combined with her feeling that she "should" get "the most out of the exercises" provided by doing every exercise, was sometimes stressful for her. And yet, I could clearly hear her express the interior movements that indicated she was ready to move to the next week or Week of the Exercises. When, intentionally, there were slightly fewer supplemental resources provided in the Third Week in order to focus on the gospel texts, she had a harder time

connecting with the exercises and she spent even more time adding her own material. There were some occasions when I became concerned that she was using the gathering of these resources to avoid doing the inner work of an exercises, but overall this practice was generative for her. This retreatant was able to get the benefit of moving with the flow of the dynamics of the Exercises, and can continue to work with the exercises, and what arose from them, now that the structured retreat is over.

Lastly, a couple of retreatants reflected that they regretted not working through exercises, or elements of exercises, that were not speaking to them at the time. This included added modalities such as art journaling or reflecting with some images or music. One decided she had "made a 'mistake' by not including exercises or elements that were not speaking" to her at the time and just working with "the ones that did speak." Another noted that she "didn't like drawing, art, collage but in retrospect wished" that she had made herself do it. Those retreatants recognized that they could have gained new insights by working outside of their more familiar or comfortable prayer practices. This suggests that more emphasis could be placed by the director on using a variety of modalities, particularly if they notice a directee seems to be avoiding some types of practices.

2. *What was your general experience of the retreat over the course of the 38 weeks. How did the rhythm of prayer feel to you? What changes did you notice in how you were engaging this material?* All who completed the retreat reflected in their closing questionnaires or interviews that the experience was worthwhile. One retreatant who had expressed in her initial interview that she was "going through a period of dryness in spiritual practice" said at the end: "I was looking for refreshment, but this has been a spring in the desert." "Oh," said another, "this was a good nine months." Yet another proclaimed, "I have reclaimed and rewritten my spirituality."

One retreatant said, “I’m really glad that I’ve done it.” She reflected that the experience was not what she expected and that during the Exercises “there were moments when I definitely felt like there was the Spirit poking at my consciousness.” Having gone through the process, she said, “I find myself just hearing things differently and I want to go back and start at one. Do it again.”

Another retreatant who was making this retreat at a time that was complex and challenging for her personally and professionally, said: “This was a very fruitful experience at a time when I was needing to physically heal. This became an important part of my healing process and the prayer process, especially the very physical prayers (breath and movement), seemed to ground me in my body which I needed.”

3. *What surprised you about your experience of the retreat? What challenged you? In what ways did you experience the Spirit during the course of the retreat?* Several retreatants reported an initial difficulty or resistance to engaging with the gospel scriptures because of the ways that scripture has traditionally been translated, interpreted, or used. They were then surprised that they found a new way to hear the scripture text through these Exercises. As one retreatant expressed it: “What surprised me was how much the scriptures came alive when there was the engagement of all the senses and the use of the imagination. The experience definitely helped me break open the scriptures in very meaningful ways.” And another: “I was surprised at how much Scripture became alive for me and the story resonated with me in such a different way.”

Still another expressed surprise at what she discovered as she engaged with scripture in the contemplations: “I wasn't surprised by how resistant I was to being one of the men in the

story. But I was surprised at what different insight I got when I was being one of the men in the story." In a similar vein, another retreatant reflected:

> I am surprised that I'm now aware that there's a healthy image of masculine and want to integrate that God is male and female. The process of going through the Exercises helped move towards that integration, through developing a relationship, a friendship with Jesus. I was able to see in him a healthy masculine representative because I see in him a person who is willing to integrate the male and female.

Others also expressed surprise at their deepening relationship with Jesus. "Upon reflection," wrote one, "I have not engaged with Christianity - and Jesus - so deeply in a while and feel like this reignited that relationship and brought it to a deeper level." Similarly, another wrote:

> The most surprising part of the retreat was the realization that my relationship with Jesus was very distant and the exploration (in many ways) of imagining Jesus as a person – thinking of him as a child and conversing with him in the colloquies about choices he was making, and how he was feeling about experiences in his life from childhood through the passion and resurrection.

Another retreatant expressed surprise at the emotion the Exercises evoked in her:

> Whenever I was brought to an emotional state I knew the Spirit was working in me and the material. I often found that it was in the meeting times when I was reading back over the material that additional emotion would come up that surprised me. These surprise moments were also what challenged me. They made me feel very vulnerable and there was a bit of fear around becoming that vulnerable and real at the same time.

Lastly, one retreatant, who came in with some trepidation but trusted me and the others in the group, saw growth in her attitude towards the *Spiritual Exercises* themselves. She found herself wanting to do them again:

> So I guess that is growth, you know, it's changed. It certainly has changed. So my overall feeling is I'm really glad. . . . I'm thinking

> that I would like to do them [the Exercises] again and maybe come at them a little bit differently, second time around.

4. What was your favorite aspect of the retreat? What was your favorite part of the exercises themselves as presented? Least favorite? What was most helpful? Least helpful? Most retreatants expressed that the variety of resources or ways to approach the exercises, what one called "different entry points," was one of their favorite aspects of the retreat. Predictably, not everything appealed to every retreatant. For example, one remarked that "some of the music I just played over and over again all day. It just sort of hemmed my day." On the other hand, she also said, "I am not a huge poetry fan. Often poetry just leaves me feeling stupid. I struggled with so much of the poetry. It's just not my thing. Sometimes I think some of it is. I haven't been very successful at understanding poetry, so I resist even trying." By contrast, another retreatant said, "I found that poetry particularly, at various times, something would just sort of jump off the page." Still another said that creative writing, "not just journalling," was her favorite practice. One expressed that the variety made the Exercises more accessible and wrote: "I don't really have a least favorite or helpful—though some things worked more than others from week to week—so sometimes an image exercise was helpful and sometimes it wasn't—same with other media—it truly depended." All of these responses indicate growth in recognizing the value of different ways of knowing, of experiencing God, which reflects one of the Basic Ecofeminist Principles underlying these Exercises.

Two retreatants specifically mentioned experiencing a revitalized Christian practice. One wrote: "My favorite aspect of the retreat was the gift and the opportunity to embrace my own understanding of the Divine in a Christian context. I learned that my theology is an appropriate way to know Jesus."

An interesting aspect of the field test was that half of the participants chose to meet for group spiritual direction, rather than one-on-one. There are trade-offs to doing the Exercises in a group format, and challenges for both the group and director. However, this group seemed to see only the benefits and it was the favorite aspect of the retreat for at least one of them. "It's been really good to have people that I can talk to about these things without either code or sort of suppressing. Yep. It's really wonderful. "

These women all knew each other well, having gone through spiritual direction formation and training together. And yet, one of the group reflected:

> I was kind of surprised to find out that I felt like our relationships now go even deeper and I wasn't thinking that was really possible. I already thought we had these really good relationships. Strong. And so that's been a real gift of doing these Exercises with people that I know and trust. I have heard from everybody, you know, things that maybe I hadn't heard before.

Another member of the group spoke of the deep sense of connection from doing the Exercises together and praying for each other as they recognized what they were going through in their daily lives. I also observed how the responses of the group to each member's sharing led them even deeper in their own reflections. The member of the group who was not able to fully engage the Exercises because of life and family circumstances was still held by the group in her sharing around both her responses to the exercises she did and the difficult circumstances of her life at the time. When she was there, she was fully present and contributed significantly to the group discussion. If the essence of both the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* and ecofeminist theology and spirituality is relationship, if God **is** relationship, then they were experiencing and deepening that relationship with every session in real time.

5. *Where are you and God right now? How would you describe your relationship to God today? What images or metaphors for the Divine feel particularly powerful for you now?* The

responses to this set of questions were varied but reflected a deep sense of connection nurtured by the retreat, as evidenced by the frequent use of the word "more." Here are some examples:

> I definitely think God and I are on friendlier, more familiar terms. I definitely have a sense of a deeper relationship with Yeshua. God as the Galaxy, The Divine Milieu in which I live and breathe and move and have being. God as the seed that breaks open in the soil with the help of water and sun that grows into a life-giving, fruit bearing plant. God as a trinitarian relationship, best symbolized by the Celtic symbol. God in the person of Yeshua, a brother, friend, redeemer and sanctifier.
>
> *
>
> My relationship with the Divine is strong. I have a more developed sense of how the Divine works in me and through the world - it's almost as if I can see those threads of connection - in nature, in human relationship - in the way that I think or approach life - more clearly now.
>
> *
>
> I'm feeling more that God is a part of my life, throughout the day—a source that I can tap into at any time, not an entity I try to "reach" at certain times.
>
> *
>
> Importance of friendship as model for the Divine. That's where the transformation, my own inner transformation and that energy that relationship will allow transformation to begin to take place, to think about Jesus as friend.
>
> *
>
> I still have whitemalegod tapes in my head. I still see HIS presence and it perturbs me. I am still deeply troubled by masculine language for God/Spirit, especially the Holy Spirit. But I feel a glimmer of hope that I can move to an integrated, bisexual experience of the Divine as I'm exposed to healthier masculine energy.

6. *What are the strongest beliefs you hold? Did those deepen or change over the course of the retreat?* It is clear from the responses to these questions that the retreat did not change the

core beliefs of any of the retreatants. However, the retreatants expressed that their engagement with the Exercises deepened, strengthened, and perhaps expanded, those core beliefs. A common thread was the belief and experience of God as Love, which is in accord with the Ignatian view of God as well as the relational concept of God in ecofeminist theology. One retreatant expressed it this way:

> I continue to believe that the strongest belief I hold about God is that our relationship with God is God's gift to us, which manifests itself as God's presence in the world and in our lives. God's presence to us is Love, and we can express that Love and Grace to Others. This has deepened over the course of the retreat, along with a newer and deeper understanding that Jesus's gift was to be fully present in humanity, to be fully present in human suffering. That was the cross. We have sanitized the experience of the cross so much, but it was betrayal, pain, suffering and death. . . . Finally, I think I would not have come to an understanding of what I think my purpose in life is, currently and for the future - to nurture or help create moments of spiritual connection - would have happened without this retreat.

Another retreatant wrote: "My strongest beliefs have to do with God's unconditional love for everyone and during the retreat this was strengthened by the many examples from the gospels and the creative ways we were offered to think about those examples and to engage in them. By becoming a part of the gospel stories, I felt this love in action again and again."

7. *How would you describe Jesus today? How would you describe your relationship to Jesus today?* All of the retreatants who completed the retreat described having an experience of a more real and human Jesus. This is a key element of both Ignatian spirituality and Christian ecofeminist theology. For example, one retreatant, while continuing to describe Jesus in more cosmic terms, also expressed an experience of him as a "real person." Others spoke of Jesus in more personal terms. One expressed that she had

> a newer and deeper understanding that Jesus's gift was to be fully present in humanity, to be fully present in human suffering. That

> was the cross. We have sanitized the experience of the cross so much, but it was betrayal, pain, suffering and death. Through this, I have experienced during this retreat - both in my colloquies and in life - Jesus sitting with me through pain, through betrayal, through the darkness. And the reverse - Jesus through joy, through love!

Similarly, another retreatant wrote: "Because of the week where we thought about the childhood of Jesus, I have begun to see Jesus as my brother (who I love and admire). I feel this in his love and protection and in his example. I also feel/felt this in my experience of his weariness, his frustration and his pain—it all became very personal." This more personal relationship to Jesus made his suffering in the Third Week even more real for one retreatant:

> It made me cry to think of when I was at that scene in the Garden. And I was trying to see it through Jesus's eyes. I had pictured, you know, he prayed. He asked for the cup to be taken from him. He knew it was going to happen. He knew who he was and how. And it never occurred to me how terrified he must have been. And when I was seeing it through his eyes, I just was. Terrified. And that right there, so that says a lot. I like Jesus better.

Some retreatants adopted the more intimate description of Jesus as their "friend." For example, one retreatant wrote:

> I would describe Jesus as Real! Present! Resurrected! He is out of the Church, but I often find that he is sitting with me, now, in the worship services I officiate in the church. I have never had that experience before. We celebrate the liturgy together; we engage the hymns together; sometimes he rolls his eyes at the theology, but he is there! He is my friend, my young friend whose soul is ancient and whose wisdom is eternal.

For others this changed perspective on Jesus was a struggle. For example, one retreatant recalled how she felt when she first heard about Jesus becoming a friend: "the hair on the back of my neck went straight up. Because I associated all that with evangelical, you know, Jesus is my best friend, he's my bestie and we go to football games together and I just can't do it. So, it took me a while

to shift that." Another recognized that she did not have that sense of Jesus as a friend yet, but she still had a new appreciation for the humanity of Jesus:

> I could find the human Jesus in the scripture reading, but I haven't yet reconciled that Jesus and how that Jesus fits into my life with the Jesus that I grew up with in the Catholic Church. I am still struggling with that, and trying to figure out, what is my relationship? It's certainly different than it was, but I don't feel as though I've answered that question for myself.

8. How would you describe Mary, the mother of Jesus, today? How would you describe your relationship her? Because of the emphasis in this retreat on the experience of women, I wanted to explore whether the retreatants experienced the character of Mary differently. As with the question about relationship to Jesus, several retreatants expressed a changed relationship to or understanding of Mary, including that through the Exercises Mary became more real to them. For example, one expressed having a "stronger sense of Mary being available to me in prayer. I feel like this work brought her out of the text for me and made her a human I could visit with and see her interactions with Jesus. That is new for me. She became more real for me in a human context." Another described coming to a place where she would call her "friend."

> Mary is the white man's word for Miriam. It is helpful for me to use the Hebrew name that she would have been called, to remove the centuries old stereotypes that come with the name Mary. Miriam also lives in both Kronos and Kairos time and plays a pivotal role in the Christian journey of faith. I like to consider her a mother, sister and now more deeply because of the Exercises, a friend.

A third wrote: "I feel during this retreat I have become devoted to Mary and she has become an important channel to the divine, to God and Jesus and the whole creation."

However, not all experienced a change in their relationship with Mary. One retreatant said: "I do not know that my experience with Mary has changed much during this retreat, other than a renewed sense of her place in the story and the narrative. I would say I have, more than

Mary, a deeper sense of many of the women in Jesus's life who were erased or silenced." Interestingly another, who had described more interaction with Mary during the retreat, said in the closing questionnaire: "My relationship with Mary is not a close one and that did not change during the retreat. But I'm not vexed by Mary, so my attention was not on finding her in this work. I've been vexed by Mary's son since I was old enough to reason. He is the one I intentionally sought and he is the one I found."

9. *Did your understanding of or relationship to the natural world change over the course of the retreat? Please explain.* Since the connection with the natural world and ecospirituality was one of the things that drew most of these retreatants to this project, few expressed a change in that relationship over the course of the retreat. For them, it was the sense of affirmation that was important, and how to incorporate the natural world into their spiritual lives. "My relationship with the natural world has always been deep and a source of encountering the Holy One," wrote one retreatant, "I appreciated being able to incorporate this aspect of God's nature into the prayer times." Wrote another: "My love for the more than human world, my connection with all that lives in the earth and on the earth, and my conversations with more than human life were validated and liberated."

However, a couple of retreatants did express a change in their understanding of that relationship. As one described it:

> My understanding of my relationship to the natural world, came to include my relationship to the divine. All of the ways we considered the natural world during the weeks brought the gospels to life and helped me see that the damage we do to the environment represents the damage of our relationship to God.

This retreatant seems to have internalized the "eco" aspects of ecofeminism. Another described a change in her understanding of the importance of the natural world in her life and spirituality:

> I think my understanding of place and physical place, and how the sacred can be both in and created in that (e.g. doing my Ignatian practice in the SwissAir lounge of the Zurich airport!) has changed. I have always been proud of Miami and its relationship to shaping my identity, but understanding the role of its physical place in that has been new, as has a clearer sense of water, the ocean and how important it is to my soul.

10. What will you carry with you from the experience of making this retreat? Is that what you expected or hoped for? One retreatant made the sweeping statement: "I will carry with me the transformation at the ground of my being." Other retreatants described what that transformation looked like for them. For example, one said, "I cannot listen to a scripture reading now without correcting it." Another also specifically mentioned her engagement with scripture: "I carry with me the understanding that anytime I want a closer relationship with Yeshua all I have to do is enter imaginatively into the scripture and to have a conversation with him." A third mentioned now feeling the Spirit nudging her to "look at this a different way, think about this differently than you had thought about it before, throw that out and think about it in a new way. I think that's good for me."

Some saw a change in their spiritual practice as something they will carry with them from the retreat experience. For example, one wrote of "a key sense that review is an important part of our spiritual life." Another wrote: "I will carry the importance of daily rituals in building a deeper relationship with the divine. The retreat became a vital part of my routine and possibly changed the course of a day for the better."

11. *Ignatius sent people out to offer the Exercises to others after making the retreat with him once. Having completed this retreat, would you feel comfortable offering it to others (in whole or in part) with the material as presented? Why or why not?* Because all the retreatants were formed and trained as spiritual directors, I asked for feedback on the adapted Exercises from

that perspective.[8] This included whether, having done the retreat, they would feel comfortable leading it themselves using this material. Some who were not seeing directees at that time did not respond to the question. One said that she planned to use some of the material and techniques from these Exercises with a study group on environmental justice she would be leading at her church. Another, who was part of the spiritual direction group, was considering starting a spiritual direction group at church, since she could not imagine doing the *Spiritual Exercises* in a group "without having a huge base of trust." One felt she needed more time with the Exercises before she would feel comfortable offering them, and another wanted to start back and do the Exercises again. However, three felt very comfortable (in one case "extremely comfortable") or excited about offering these Exercises to others. As one said: "I have already told so many people about this! Yes!"

Another described wanting to make the power of these Exercises available to others:

> I would feel very comfortable offering this to others, with the material as presented. In many ways before the retreat, I felt my faith was kind of formal and stiff. The exercises helped me to see myself as a participant in the Christian story. Also, that the Christian story is all-inclusive—especially of those who have been marginalized, including our non-human companions on this earth.

*12. From the perspective of a spiritual director, what material did you find most helpful***?**

All the retreatants who answered this question mentioned the variety of supplemental materials or "paths" to reflect on the themes and scripture. One noted the importance of the "multimedia/technological aspect" of these Exercises "from a generational perspective." She also noted that "these practices help give people language to express spirituality" that they may not have.

[8] Some of the retreatants also gave specific technical suggestions, most of which I included in the final compilation of these Exercises as appropriate.

A couple of retreatants specifically mentioned the added and extended reviews of earlier material. For example: “The review has stayed with me time and again as a particular stroke of genius on your part. I feel like creating the time and space for that is most important as a spiritual director.”

13. *What resources would help you feel more comfortable offering this retreat to your own directees?* This last question was extremely helpful for me, even if few retreatants made any concrete suggestions. One mentioned having “an outline of the entire Program.” That would indeed be helpful for spiritual directors offering the Exercises, and since they would have the entire directory that would be available to them. However, Ignatius specifically discouraged giving something like that to retreatants, as the director needs the flexibility to adapt the Exercises to the retreatant before her (SE 11).

Another specific suggestion was to have “all the scriptures printed out in advance.” I intentionally did not do that, so that retreatants could use the translation of the biblical texts that was the most comfortable or familiar for them. However, a director offering the Exercises could absolutely do that for her directee retreatants. Through the course of this project I became convinced of the utility of providing an audio recorded version of the scriptures and major meditations for retreatants who want to pray the exercises outside or while walking.

From these responses I would also add some more supplemental material, particularly in the Third and Fourth Weeks. However, that would be for the benefit of the spiritual director, who needs to discern what and whether to offer those to any individual retreatant. An intriguing suggestion for supplemental resources from one retreatant was to use children’s books that fit with the material, as they are accessible for a wide variety of retreatants who may not connect easily with poetry or other media.

Lastly, one retreatant mentioned wanting some training, not just in offering the Exercises, but in the underlying ecofeminist theology underpinning this adaptation:

> I would probably want to delve into some of the primary sources that were used to develop this retreat, but also to engage in a training about how to offer it from an eco-feminist perspective. I feel this training would be different than participating in the retreat as perhaps we would be learning about issues that may arise in general and how to address certain potential issues.

Conclusions

This project has been a labor of love and a calling. Indeed, I have never felt called to something as strongly as I was to the creation of these adapted Exercises. The experience of creating the adapted Exercises and offering them as a field test exceeded even my wildest expectations. It was very gratifying to see the results not only on a week-by-week basis, but as I reviewed the data. The retreatants had an authentic experience of an Ignatian 19th Annotation retreat and engaged deeply with the ecofeminist principles.

The retreatants expressed the impact the experience had on them, but for myself, I know I have been profoundly changed. As I was creating each week, I felt the presence of Spirit working through me. After every session in the field test I found myself saying, "Wow!" The retreatants engaged so deeply, even more deeply than when I have led the more traditional *Exercises*, and I am not sure I thought that was possible. Their expression of the power of both the Exercises and the ecofeminist lens affirmed the importance of this work. This experience has changed how I see my call to the ministry and my practice of spiritual direction going forward.

This was not the first time I had directed the *Spiritual Exercises*, nor was it the first time I had facilitated group spiritual direction. I had also led a group through the first six weeks of O'Brien's directory. However, this was the first time I had led the whole 19th Annotation retreat using the group spiritual direction format. From this experience I learned a few things that will be

helpful for leading a group through the *Spiritual Exercises* in the future. The first is that a looser structure than the Classic Group Spiritual Direction model may work best in this context. The group started with that more formal structure but organically found their own rhythm. The second is that in the future I would build in individual meetings with the group participants, not only when they missed or fell behind the others in the group. I believe this would help the group members get the most out the *Spiritual Exercises* and the group experience.

When I began this project—even before I began the Doctor of Ministry program—I had a sense that this work was needed to help bring people into connection with each other and the natural world. Looking back at the experience and the results of the field test, I have come to understand that those who already have a connection to and spiritual experience of the more-than-human world need this retreat as much, if not more, than those who do not. It is crucial that those who have taken steps along the path of recognizing the interconnection of all creation, of affirming the worth of all beings, of challenging the andro- and anthropocentric structures of our society and reframing or revisioning them, can be validated in their knowing and experience and sustained for the work ahead of living into that knowing. They are swimming against the current of our culture, but in these challenging times their experience and their voices are even more vital.

The next step for this project must be to find ways to make the material available for directors who offer the *Spiritual Exercises*, so that its impact can be more widely felt. Perhaps this will start with the retreatants in this project who are excited to continue this work with others. After all, that is how it all started back in the 16th Century; Ignatius led people through the retreat and then they in turn offered it to others. Whatever form that may take, the Spirit will be in it.

I conclude with the words of one of my retreatants reflecting back on this experience, which expresses so well what I am feeling coming out of this project: “I have a sense of God

opening things up, seeing Jesus in those constricted spaces and opening them up for others; a sense of possibility." Yes.

APPENDIX A – THE ADAPTED SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

An Introduction to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises
19th Annotation, Extended Ignatian Exercises
Informed by an Ecofeminist Perspective

I am excited to journey with you on this spiritual adventure. Thank you for agreeing to be part of this project. I believe it will be rich for both of us.

This is an opportunity to have your imagination and your life shaped by the story of "God with us." The world offers many narratives, but not all are life-giving. What we believe about ourselves, our reality, our God largely determines our experience. What fills our imagination is what we become.

The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* are a handbook for prayer developed by Ignatius of Loyola in the sixteenth-century based on his own spiritual experience, and the Catholic theology and patriarchal worldview of his time. Ignatius called them "exercises for the soul." The aim of the Spiritual Exercises is to "enable, facilitate, or prepare the ground for an encounter with God."

In the *Spiritual Exercises,* you will explore your beliefs, your experience, and your imagination in ways designed to deepen your understanding of yourself and your relationship with the Divine and the world. You will become deeply enmeshed in the life and teaching of Jesus, make friends with him, with his mother, Mary, and make connections between their lives and your own. You will explore Biblical scripture in ways that may be new to you.

The *Exercises* are not only for personal enrichment; they are also about shaping the way you move in the world. Ignatius hoped that by the end of the retreat you would know God's love deeply and return God's love in such a way as to embody that love. I believe Ignatius would have approved of activist Grace Lee Boggs' admonition to "transform yourself to transform the world." This is why discernment and decision-making are so integral to the Exercises: Active love involves making concrete choices on a daily basis.

The Extended Ignatian Exercises (also called a 19th Annotation retreat after the note Ignatius included in his *Exercises*), are usually completed in about 9 months, including 5-6 "Preparation Weeks." Ignatius divided the retreat into 4 phases he called "Weeks" (capital "W"), that have different themes related to the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

For the 9-10 months of your journey through the *Exercises* each week (lower case "w") will be numbered 01-38 and each will have an organizing theme. I will email you a sheet with instructions for each week. Some weeks there will be attached handouts for some of the exercises. Some weeks will include links to music, videos or other material for your consideration.

Here is some information to help along the way:

Daily Prayer Periods: You will find what works for you. Ignatius was all about flexibility, though consistency does help. Expect to spend 45 minutes to an hour per day with your prayer exercises. This is a guideline; some days you may want to linger longer. Followed this prayer time with a brief time of reflection on your experience during that days' prayer time. In Ignatian practice we reflect, then reflect on that experience of reflection, then later reflect back on all that reflection – all without judgment. Just jot down in your journal what you felt or noticed.

My suggestion for how to structure your daily prayer period is:
Open by taking a few deep breaths and offer the prayer for the week
Do the exercise offered for that day
Close with the prayer suggested for that day, or week, or use the Lord's Prayer or another prayer of your choice. Silence is also always appropriate.
Briefly reflect on how the prayer period went that day.

In addition to the daily exercises, Ignatius recommended doing the Examen prayer daily. The Examen invites you to reflect back on your day. There are a variety of ways to do the Examen, which we will explore in Week 01. It could be as simple as asking yourself, "What was I grateful for today? What was I not so grateful for today?" or it can be a more in-depth review. I have found doing the Examen before I go to bed, doing the assigned reading and meditations and journaling in the morning works best for me. Some prefer to do the Examen in the morning or mid-day. Some like to do the Examen right before the daily exercises. Whatever works for you. See if you begin to notice any patterns in what comes up for you during the Examen and include them in your journal.

Daily Exercises: I will give you daily exercises for your prayer periods week by week. I will typically send them out the evening after we meet. Do the exercise for a given day and journal what comes up for you. Your journal may be in words or drawings. They may include poetry or collage. Whatever allows you remember and reflect on your experience of prayer both for yourself and for our meeting time together. You can journal after doing the exercise for that day, or while you are doing it; whichever works best for you.

The weeks are numbered starting with 01, and each day is numbered accordingly (1.1, 1.2, etc.). Don't confuse the weeks of your exercises with the "Weeks" of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which are really 4 phases or movements within the arc of the *Exercises*. You will be invited to keep an altar or shrine throughout the *Exercises*, and to change it for each phase or Week.

Don't be concerned if you feel drawn to stay on one meditation or prayer for several days, or to spend more than one week on a given week's exercises. As long as you are spending time on the *Exercises* and Examen each day, you do not have to do all the exercises assigned for each week. Follow the promptings of the Spirit; you will not miss anything. **The last prayer period before we meet should always be a review of your journal since our last meeting, regardless of your progress through the daily exercises.**

Daily exercises may include specific prayers, meditations, contemplations (more on that later), videos, *lectio divina* on scripture or poems, *visio divina* or art meditations, *audio divina* or music meditations, body movement, engagement with nature, or other practices drawn from a number

of sources. Ignatius dictated the arc and movement of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the spiritual goals of different phases of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and some unique meditations and contemplations, suggested some scriptures, and provided guidelines for those directing the *Exercises*. Beyond that there is a lot of flexibility to tailor the *Exercises* to the needs of the individual making the retreat.

If a poem or scripture passage is offered, begin by praying with it using *lectio divina* – reading it 2-3 times and noting the word or phrase that has energy behind it for you and consider how that connects with your life. Then there may be additional instructions on how to approach that text. As the weeks progress, some scriptures you will be praying with using the technique of Ignatian contemplation which will be explained later.

There is also some teaching throughout the *Exercises* about specific concepts of Ignatian spirituality and ecofeminist thought. Some of that will happen in our sessions, but there will also be readings from several sources included in the daily assignments. Be sure to include in your journal anything from those readings that stands out for you or any questions that arise. Sometimes I will also provide optional additional resources if you want further reading on a topic.

Journal: You will want to keep a journal and use it daily. I recommend you keep a journal that will give you space both for written reflections and drawing or other artwork you may create in response to the daily reflections. Some also keep a notebook, which may be part of your journal or separate, for the resources that will be provided with the weekly exercises. Some prefer to keep the journal and all the resources on their computer.

You will have a lot of material by the end of the retreat. It is important that you keep your journal material organized in such a way that you can easily go back and review particular weeks or exercises within each week. Some find it helpful to keep separate journals for each of the Weeks, or to use tabs or dividers to mark where each Week begins.

You can journal after doing the exercise for that day, or during it. This is your retreat. Engage with it in the way that works best for you.

Most importantly, review your journal in the prayer period before we meet and bring your journal with you to our meetings.

Music: Throughout the retreat you will be offered music selections, and invited to recall your own favorites. Some have found it helpful to save these in a YouTube of Spotify playlist and continue to listen to them during this retreat.

Next Steps: Before you begin Week 01 of the *Exercises*, you should also read these handouts: The Journey of Ignatius of Loyola and Basic Ecofeminist Principles. I will send those to you separately. Note in your journal any thoughts or questions that arise from these readings.

The Journey of Ignatius of Loyola
(Excerpt from *The Ignatian Adventure* by Kevin O'Brien, SJ)

IÑIGO LÓPEZ DE LOYOLA Y Oñaz was born in 1491, the thirteenth child in a family of minor nobility. Like other boys coming of age at that time, Iñigo imagined himself as one of the knights he read about in the romantic novels of his era: cultured, pious, skilled in warfare, and irresistible to ladies-in-waiting.

The times fermented the idealism and passion that were in his Basque blood. It was an age for adventurers of all kinds: merchants crisscrossing continents and seas in search of new wealth; explorers setting out on expeditions to unknown worlds; writers, artists, and scientists inspiring a rebirth in learning that would expand the reaches of the mind and culture. In his youth, Iñigo could not have imagined the very different kind of adventure that God had in store for him.

The Young Knight

Iñigo's family connections helped secure him a position serving as a page to the treasurer of the kingdom of Castile. So he left his native Loyola at the age of sixteen for a life at court. The upwardly mobile Iñigo easily fit into his new role: riding, dueling, gambling, dancing, and romancing young ladies. Though short in stature, he got involved in some noteworthy brawls, one of which resulted in charges being filed against him.

When he was twenty-six, Iñigo took up the life of a soldier in the northern town of Pamplona. Ever loyal, Iñigo did not hesitate to come to the Crown's defense when in 1521 the French attacked Pamplona. It was a lost battle from the start, with Iñigo's small band of soldiers easily outnumbered. As a matter of honor, Iñigo refused to give up the town fortress. Through the walls of the citadel crashed a cannonball, which struck Iñigo in the legs. Impressed by Iñigo's courage, the French soldiers tended to his wounds and carried him back to Loyola, where doctors reset his legs. He almost died from an infection related to the injury.

As with his loyalty and honor, Iñigo's vanity ran deep. After his legs were rebroken and had begun to heal, he noticed that his right leg was shorter than his left and that there was an unsightly protrusion of the bone. He worried that these deformities would spell the end of his knightly life. He fretted over not being able to wear the flashy, tight-fitting clothing of a courtier. So he had his doctors break and reset his limb again, saw off the bump on his leg, and stretch his shorter leg in a rack-like instrument. The pain was excruciating but, in his worldly estimation, worth it.

For six months, the restless Iñigo convalesced. To pass the time, he asked his caregiver for some novels of chivalry to read, but all she could find were a popular version of the life of Christ and a collection of tales of saints. As he read and pondered these books, he noticed a change taking place within him. Daydreams of serving the king as a valiant knight and winning the love of a noble lady, though at first enticing, ultimately left him feeling inwardly dry and discontented. By contrast, when he imagined devoting his life to the service of God and others, as had the saints he was reading about, Iñigo experienced a deep sense of joy. In his autobiography, written in the third person and dictated to a fellow Jesuit near the end of his life, Ignatius writes:

“When he thought of worldly matters, he found much delight; but after growing weary and dismissing them, he found that he was dry and unhappy. But when he thought of . . . imitating the saints in all the austerities they practiced, he not only found consolation in these thoughts, but even after they had left him he remained happy and joyful. “ (Autobiography, no. 8)

God was stirring up something new in our young knight. Ignatius became convinced that God was speaking to him through his interior attractions and reactions.

The Pilgrim

Iñigo wisely wanted to test what these unfamiliar desires and dreams were all about. So once he recovered from his injuries, he set out on a new adventure, intending to go to Jerusalem as a pilgrim. He left behind his stately family home and traveled widely—begging, preaching, and caring for the sick and poor. One of his first stops was a Benedictine mountaintop shrine of Our Lady at Montserrat. There, after an all-night vigil, the young romantic left behind his sword before the altar of Our Lady and donned the sackcloth of a beggar. With a pilgrim’s staff in hand, Iñigo gave his courtly robe and feathered cap to a beggar.

From Montserrat he set out for the small town of Manresa. Iñigo stayed there for about ten months, spending hours every day in solitary prayer and working at a hospice. Later in his life, he reflected that during this time, God worked on him like a teacher instructing a student, gently schooling him in the ways of prayer and holiness. At Manresa, Iñigo discerned carefully the interior movements of his soul: the attractions, feelings, thoughts, and desires that led him to greater intimacy with Jesus Christ and those that were distractions to his spiritual growth. Trying to outdo the piety of the saints he read about, he engaged in severe bodily penances. At times, he became mired in self-doubt. Through prayer and wise spiritual guidance, Iñigo discerned that his seemingly pious acts were really displays of vanity. As he sought a more balanced spiritual life, he encountered a God who was not a tyrant waiting for him to slip up but a helping God who wanted for him the fullness of life.

At Manresa, Iñigo enjoyed the first of several mystical visions that would mark his life. Sitting by the river Cardonner, he experienced an enlightenment that allowed him to see the world with new eyes and to find God in all things. In his autobiography, the pilgrim saint remarked that he learned more about God and the world in that one moment than he did throughout the rest of his life.

Iñigo began to make notes of his spiritual insights. He talked to people about the spiritual life whenever and wherever he could and recorded the fruit of these conversations. Those notes became the basis for a manual of prayer that he would later title the Spiritual Exercises. The pilgrim begged his way to Jerusalem in 1523. Iñigo intended to spend the rest of his life in the region where Jesus had lived and labored. However, because of the dangerous political situation in the Holy Land at the time, the Franciscan guardians of the sacred sites ordered him to leave after only a few weeks. His romantic hopes of spending his life in the Holy Land dashed, Iñigo faced a moment of decision: how was he to serve God? He writes, again in the third person:

"After the said pilgrim came to realize that it was God's will that he not remain in Jerusalem, he kept wondering what he ought to do, and finally he was inclined toward spending some time in studies in order to help souls; and so he decided to go to Barcelona." (Autobiography, no. 50)

Underlying this succinct, matter-of-fact account are some profound spiritual insights. Iñigo was learning that he had to be flexible in responding to God's will in his life. And his decisions had to be directed toward "helping souls," or helping people, which he could do in many ways, all depending on the circumstances he faced.

The Student

Once back in Spain, Iñigo decided to begin studies for the priesthood, but he lacked knowledge of Latin, the language of the church. So at the age of thirty-three, he spent two years in Barcelona, studying alongside schoolchildren. Iñigo subsequently attended universities in Alcalá and Salamanca, but his education was self-directed and haphazard. In these university towns, he continued to preach, teach, and offer his Spiritual Exercises. He was arrested several times by the Spanish Inquisition, which questioned his credentials and carefully examined the Spiritual Exercises for heresy. The authorities limited Iñigo's ability to teach and preach, but they did not condemn the Spiritual Exercises.

Lacking formal academic training and wanting to become a better teacher and preacher, Iñigo traveled to the renowned University of Paris to study philosophy and theology. There he became known as "Ignatius," a Latin form of his name. In Paris, he met other students, such as Francis Xavier and Peter Faber, who were captivated by Ignatius' experience of God, his vision of the world, and his adventurous spirit.

On August 15, 1534, in a small chapel on Montmartre, the "hill of martyrs," in Paris, Ignatius and six other men professed religious vows of poverty and chastity to bind them more closely together. They also vowed to travel to the Holy Land after completing their studies for the priesthood. If, after a year, passage proved impractical, they promised to offer their services to the pope instead.

The Founder

The companions, now eleven in number, met in Venice and preached, worked in hospitals, and gave the Exercises. While waiting for passage to Jerusalem, Ignatius and those others who were not yet priests were ordained in 1537. Unable to go to the Holy Land because Venice was at war with the Ottoman Empire, these "friends in the Lord," as they called themselves, set out for Rome as they had vowed. Along the way, near Rome, in a chapel in the small village of La Storta, Ignatius enjoyed another mystical vision, in which he saw God the Father with Jesus, the Son, carrying his cross. Ignatius heard the Father say, "I will be favorable to you in Rome." In the vision, Ignatius had a clear sense of being called to serve alongside Jesus.

When they settled in Rome, the companions deliberated for many weeks about their future, all the while teaching, preaching, and performing works of mercy. They eventually decided to form a religious order under a vow of obedience to a superior. Ignatius was their unanimous choice.

Inspired by the vision at La Storta, Ignatius insisted that they call themselves the Company (or Society) of Jesus. They dared to take the name of Jesus (which no other religious order had done) for the simple reason that knowing, loving, and serving Jesus Christ was the inspiration and end of their mission together. They wanted to be companions of Jesus carrying his cross.

The Jesuits, as the companions soon would be called, vowed to go wherever the church's needs were greatest and wherever they could help more souls. Unlike monastic religious orders, their home would be the road. The Jesuits would meet people where they were rather than insist that people come to a monastery or a church. They offered the church a spirituality that was both mystical and practical; they would be "contemplatives in action," as the first generation of Jesuits described themselves.

When their religious order was formally constituted in 1540, the pope began to depend on the Jesuits for important missions throughout the world. Xavier set sail for India. Faber and his fellow theologians were assigned to participate in the Council of Trent. Jesuits opened schools all over Europe and across the seas to meet the church's great desire for an educated clergy and faithful. Ignatius and his Jesuits chose as their motto Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam, a Latin phrase that means "for the greater glory of God." This would be the standard for all their missions.

Ironically, as his young Jesuits embarked on various apostolic adventures around the world, the fifty-year-old Ignatius stayed put. Until his death in 1556, he managed the Society from his desk in Rome, sending others to labor all over the world while penning thousands of letters of instruction and encouragement. As superior general, Ignatius had great love for his fellow Jesuits, but he did not hesitate to challenge them. During these years in Rome, he also wrote the constitutions of his fledgling order, fine-tuned the Spiritual Exercises, and continued to give the retreat to people from all walks of life.

Ignatius died on July 31, 1556, after suffering the effects of a persistent stomach ailment. At his death, the Society numbered nearly one thousand men, with houses and colleges stretching from Brazil to across Europe and Japan. Ignatius was canonized, together with Francis Xavier, in 1622.

Source:
Kevin O'Brien, T*he Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in Daily Life*, 2011.

Basic Ecofeminist Principles

There is no one ecofeminism or ecofeminist theology; it is more correct to say there are ecofeminisms or ecofeminist theologies, plural. However, the following principles have been distilled from various writers who, whether or not they label themselves "ecofeminist," accept the **core ecofeminist insight that there is a connection between the oppression of women and oppression of the environment**. These principles will guide this adaptation of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*.

1. **Relationship is the key element of life and spirituality**. Spirituality is living with an awareness of our relationship to ourselves, to others, and to the sacred source.
2. **Interconnection and interdependence.** We live within a "bodymindspiritnature" web or weaving of reality and consciousness. We are not only isolated and autonomous individuals, but deeply connected with our environment and radically dependent on the earth and the other beings with whom we share this home.
3. **God/Spirit is source, empowerment, and relatedness**. God/Spirit is the very breath that enlivens and energizes, rather than directs or controls, all that is. God/Spirit is also the relationship itself; the matrix within which all exists. Friendship is a model for right relationship between all beings and between God/Spirit and the world as it implies both mutuality and reciprocity.
4. **Science and spirituality must be consistent**. To be credible and valuable, our understanding of God/Spirit and spirituality must be consistent with the evolving contemporary scientific understanding of reality.
5. **Skepticism of either/or constructs**. Ecofeminists reject, or at least critique, dualisms such as: heaven/earth; male/female; mind/body; reason/emotion; individual/communal; white/"non-white"; good/bad; humans/animals. These simplistic either/or constructs do not take into account the complexity of life. Also, seeing such dualisms as opposites enables a culture of domination, as one is almost always given value or priority over the other. Ecofeminists view these dualisms as being in more of a circular relationship to each other, rather than as opposites.
6. **Rejection of an anthropocentric (human centered) and androcentric (male centered) world view and ways of knowing**. What we have traditionally understood as authentic "knowing" has in fact been limited to a particular perspective, centered on human male (especially white human male) interest, experience, and point of view. All life has intrinsic value, so the perspectives and experience of those not centered by the dominant culture, particularly women, people of color, and the more-than-human world, need to be lifted up to restore balance.
7. **Embodiment**. Bodies are important and have value not only as vessels for the "soul" or "spirit." The health of bodies is important. The earth, indeed, the whole universe, is the Body of God. Bodies hold wisdom, trauma, all the range of our experience. Bodies also hold ancestral memory and experience. All spiritual practices are embodied practices because we are in bodies as we practice them.
8. **Revelation though lived experience**. We experience God/Spirit as love, but that love comes to us embedded and embodied in the ordinary fabric of our lives.
9. **Sin and evil as failure of relationship**. We carry within us the potential to align ourselves in relationship to God/Spirit and Creation, and to withdraw from relationship into self-

centered isolation. Evil is the potential we ourselves construct; the refusing to recognize the reality of our interconnection and interdependence. Sin is the behavior of living out that potential by acting without regard for the effect of our behavior on other humans or the environment. Evil and sin can be individual or collective.

10. **Restoration of right relationship as our human vocation**. The earth is in crisis because of human sin. As humans we have benefited from and share responsibility for the current state of the planet. Each of us is therefore called to actively work for towards the well-being of the earth and of all who call the earth home using our unique individual talents, passion, knowledge and insight. This is an active expression of the love of God/Spirit in the world. In this way, we partner with God for the healing and restoration for the whole earth community. This is spiritual activism, putting spirituality to work for positive social and ecological change.
11. **Salvation for all creation**. Salvation comes in the fabric of ordinary life. It is embodied and available broadly to all creation. It is a movement towards restoration and well-being.
12. **Separating Jesus and his teaching from religious doctrine**. We need to speak of Jesus from our own lived experience, rather than from church doctrine that sacralizes violence and enables patriarchy and oppression. Jesus is the embodiment, the incarnation, of God/Spirit love in human form in the ordinariness of human existence, demonstrating the value of physical bodies and the sacredness of the ordinary.

<u>Selected Sources</u>

Carol J. Adams, *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, 1993.
Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*, 1999.
Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, 2002.
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Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril*, 2018.
Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology,* 2021.
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Lara Medina and Martha R. Gonzales, *Voices from the Ancestors*, 2019.

Preparation Weeks
Week 01 – Beginning

It's an important question: How to begin?

Ignatius recommends beginning each time of prayer by pausing for a moment to silently acknowledge that we are in the presence of the Holy One (SE 75). We don't have to search; we are already held in God's loving gaze.

Myself, I always begin with my breath. I take a deep breath—let it out slowly. Do it again.

Note that for each day there are different offerings to close your time of prayer or reflection that may include a poem or written prayer, music or a video meditation. Silence, however, is always appropriate, as is your favorite written or spoken prayer (such as The Lord's Prayer). As you move through these Preparation Weeks, pay attention to which offerings draw you, or which speak most to your heart, in order to discover your own rhythm for your prayer time.

After closing your prayer time, remember to spend a few minutes reflecting back on your prayer time and writing down anything you notice. Don't be concerned if it takes a while to settle into the rhythm of the Exercises; after all, this is only the beginning.

Intention: To open myself to the presence and movement of the Holy One within me and in my life.

1.1
Read: Preparation Weeks (handout) and Creating Sacred Space (handout)
Practice: Create an altar or shrine, inside or outside, to represent your intention for these 6 weeks of preparation. After setting up your altar or shrine, spend several minutes contemplating it.
Closing: "We Look with Uncertainty" by Ann Hilman
https//grateful.org/resource/we-look-with-uncertainty/

1.2 [EF 3, 7]
Read: Meditation on Breath (handout)
Practice: Breath Meditation
Closing: Watch and pray with one of the following videos based on the words of Julian of Norwich:
"All Will be Well" Taize
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pyTWVqDsWo&t=9s
"All Will be Well" Meg Barnhouse
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Kadbd3tCqc

1.3 [EF 8]
Read: Daily Examen (handout)
Practice: Chose a version of the Examen from the handout, or another. From this point forward, a daily Examen should be part of your prayer practice at the time of day that works best for you.

You can use the same version each day or mix them up. Be sure to journal any noticings from this practice.
Close: "Gratitude" video (about 6 minutes)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4115qFsdWKQ

1.4
Read: A Note about Meditation with Scripture (handout)
Read: John 1:1, 14
Practice: Lectio divina
Closing: 5 minutes of silent meditation

1.5
Read: "In the Beginning …" Part 1 (handout)
Practice: Lectio divina with the translation of John 1:1, 14 suggested by Loorz.
Closing: "Imaginary Conversation" by Linda Pastan
https://poets.org/poem/imaginary-conversation

1.6 [EF 6]
Read: "In the Beginning …" Part 2 (handout)
Read: Genesis 1:1-5
Practice: Lectio Divina, *Praying with Color* style or art journaling
Closing: "Origin" by Lynn Ungar (handout)

1.7 (this should be the last prayer time before our meeting and will always have this structure)
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.
- Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Preparation Weeks
Introduction

"My definition of spirituality at this time is one's relationship with self, with others, with nature, with the universe, with the ancestors, and with the sacred source and great mystery of life and death. Spirituality is fundamentally about being in relationship, being aware of one's interdependence or connectedness to all that can be seen and all that is unseen. The integration of knowledge from our body, our heart, and our mind is required to be in full or complete relationship with all that is."
-Lara Medina

Ignatius did not specify a set number of "preparation days." However, he provided guidance on things he believed should happen prior to beginning the *Exercises*. In modern times, directors offering the retreat have included those in several weeks of "Preparation."

The exercises in these weeks serve several purposes: 1) Simply to get the retreatant accustomed to the rhythm and structure of the *Exercises*. Many retreatants will not have a regular, daily prayer practice before starting the *Exercises*. These weeks of preparation help them to ease into this new routine and find what works best for them. 2) To introduce themes that will carry through the *Exercises*, including in this iteration of *Exercises,* key ecofeminist concepts. 3) To prepare the retreatant to engage with the Principal and Foundation, a core Ignatian prayer, before beginning the *Exercises*. 4) To introduce the Examen prayer. 5) To allow the director and retreatant to discern the retreatant's readiness to make the full *Exercises*. This includes not only the ability to commit at this time to a daily prayer practice, but also openness to an experience of God's unconditional love.

These weeks include a lot of material you may find yourself coming back to over and over in the course of the retreat. The work of these weeks provides both a starting place and a foundation for all that will come later.

CREATING SACRED SPACE

"Creating sacred space is fundamental
to nourishing our holistic sense of self
and for reminding us who we are."
- Lara Medina

All space is sacred. All ground is holy ground. We should walk around barefoot all the time, though that would be pretty hard on the feet.

Instead, we create altars or shrines, not because they sacralize the space, but in recognition of the presence of the Divine. In the Hebrew Bible we are told that after the night when he dreamed of a stairway between heaven and earth, Jacob created an altar. He took the stone his head had lain upon, placed it upright like a pillar, and anointed it with oil. He named the place Bethel, meaning "house of God," because, he thought, "surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." (Genesis 28:10-22)

Altars or shrines also "make visible our intent of bridging the physical and the spiritual realms and of sustaining the relationship between the two." (Medina, 59). It is an ancient practice in cultures all over the world, attesting to its power. For women who have long been denied authority by patriarchal religions, home altars could be a place where they could exercise spiritual agency.

Altars or shrines can express our intentions, our histories, our sorrows, our sources of sustenance, or our commitments. They can serve as spaces for meditation, contemplation, prayer and joy. Creating them involves body, mind and spirit and in creating them we align ourselves with the sacred Source of creativity.

Specific religious traditions may have their own rules for setting up an altar or shrine, but generally the process includes:

- Prayerfully choosing and clearing a space for the altar – inside or outside.
- Blessing the space in whatever way is meaningful for you.
- Contemplatively choosing objects, symbols or images for the altar that reflect your intention for the shrine and carefully arranging them.

Altars or shrines can be as simple as an arrangement of stones, or a candle and a simple object or image. They can also be incredibly detailed and elaborate. They can be intimate and personal, or designed for communal purposes. It is the intention and how the altar functions for the altar maker that is important.

Once created, altars or shrines can be active or passive sites. An active site is regularly maintained. For example, the altar in a Taoist shrine is maintained on a regular schedule, with fresh offerings of new fresh fruit, flowers, and a ritual of the lighting of incense. Once created, a passive site requires no additional interaction from its maker.

During the *Spiritual Exercises*, you will be invited to create altars for each phase of the journey. You can set it up in the space you plan to use for your daily prayer time, inside or outside, or some place you will see it and be reminded of your commitment to this journey, your intentions, and the spiritual support accompanying you. This could be a passive altar that you set up and leave alone, or an active site you tend regularly as part of your practice. If you practice SoulCollage[tm], I find cards, either created for the altar or chosen from your existing deck, are powerful additions to altars. After you set up your altar, spend some time reflecting on it. How do the images, objects, or symbols on it work in you?

Selected Sources:
Lara Medina, *Voices from the Ancestors*, 2019.

A MEDITATION ON BREATH

"So we and the earth belong to God who is Spirit and who lives in the midst of our every breath."
- Karen Baker-Fletcher

"Spirit, as wind, breath, life is the most basic and most inclusive way to express centered embodiment."
- Sallie McFague

"*We practice the enfolding and unfolding of the divine by attending to our breath."*
- Catherine Keller

"*Recent research has shown that the smell of humus exerts a physiological effect on humans. Breathing in the scent of Mother Earth stimulates the release of the hormone oxytocin, the same chemical that promotes bonding between mother and child, between lovers. Held in loving arms, no wonder we sing in response*."
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

Many religious and spiritual traditions use a form of prayer involving the breath. In Christian tradition, breath prayer reflects the Apostle Paul's invitation to "pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17). The earliest known breath prayer from the Christian household comes from the 6th century CE and was known as the "Jesus Prayer" or the "Prayer of the Heart" and involved a phrase repeated out-loud or silently on the inhale and exhale of the breath:

(inhale) Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God
(exhale) have mercy on me a sinner.

In some traditions, breath prayer is partnered with chanting or singing, which adds an element of resonance of the tones in the body.

Today, Google "breath prayer" and you will find a multitude of books and blog posts. That should not be surprising. Science has shown that certain deep breathing patterns calms the nervous system, clears the mind, and calms anxiety. It is a common mindfulness practice.

And yet, "our breath is such an intimate companion. One that sustains us moment by moment, even as we are unaware of that sustaining gift." (Paintner, 6). So breath prayer may be our most intimate of prayers. It connects us to the Divine breath, in Hebrew *ruach*, the wind of Spirit, the Source of life flowing through us.

Our breath also connects us to our environment and reminds us of our connection to the Earth. Indeed, we breathe *with* the Earth. We breath out carbon dioxide that our bodies create from oxygen; plants breathe in that carbon dioxide and through the process of photosynthesis transform it into oxygen. In essence, we live the command to love our neighbor as ourselves through our very breath, by participating in the processes that allow all to live. We live the truth of transformation and change, with every breath, every day.

Further, “the grand exchange (God becoming incarnate in the world) means that with each breath we take, God is in us doing what we cannot— love the neighbor. Hence as we ‘exhale,’ we can love the neighbor, not with our own love, but with the only source of all life and love—God.” (McFague, *A New Climate*, 20)

If we truly reflect on breath, we breath even deeper in awe at something so necessary, so *ordinary*, and yet so miraculous. And we are reminded of the Source of life that is as close to our next breath. “Perhaps dwelling in wonder is merely a matter of learning to breathe.” (Rubenstein, 196).

Practices

There are endless ways to practice breath prayer. You may already have some of your own favorites. Here are a few of my own:

Take a favorite line from scripture, poetry or other writing and use it as a breath prayer, saying the words silently or out loud with the inhale and exhale. For example, one of my favorite breath prayers uses the famous words of Julian of Norwich:

(inhale) All shall be well and all shall be well
(exhale) and all manner of thing shall be well.

If you vocalize the words, don’t stress about how you say them, but just let them flow with or adhere to your breath, as a magnet sticks to metal. (Paintner, 6) The more you practice it, the more natural it will feel.

Artist, spiritual director and InterPlay leader Soyinka Rahim, coined the phrase BIBOLOVE – which stands for “breath in, breath out love.” (https://www.bibolove.us) It is a potent reminder, and practice. Take a deep breath, breathing in love, exhale slowly breathing out love to the world.

Writer Cole Arthur Riley (https://colearthurriley.com), created Black Liturgies, which include wonderful breath prayers that she posts on her Facebook and Instagram pages, or will email to subscribers. She is constantly creating them, and they are useful just as they are, or as inspiration for your own. For example:

(inhale) God, I am not okay.
(exhale) With You, that is okay.

Or
(inhale) God has not left me.
(exhale) I will rest in this silence.

Any singing is a form of breath prayer, but I particularly like chanting, because the repetitive phrases quiet the mind and sink deep into the heart. Taize chants are well-known and accessible. I also like the longer chants offered by John Philip Newell and Darlene Franz.

Selected Sources:

Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit,* 1998.
Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep,* 2002.
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass, 2015.*
Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, 1993.
Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, 2021.
Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder,* 2008.
Christine Valters Paintner, *Breath Prayer*, 2021.

DAILY EXAMEN

Ignatius of Loyola created the prayer he called "Examen" to be a short prayer that could be prayed at any time. It is basically a review of the past 24 hours (or since the last Examen if prayed twice a day) with an awareness of the presence of God/Spirit. "Examen" is the Latin word for an "examination," and that is what this prayer involves – we examine our day.

Dennis Hamm, SJ, a scripture professor at Creighton University, calls Ignatius of Loyola's Daily Examen "rummaging for God …going through a drawer full of stuff, feeling around, looking for something that you are sure must be there."

There are a number of ways to pray a daily Examen. Ignatius set out 5 steps, which can be summarized with this 5-Rs mnemonic from Mark Thibodeux, SJ:

1. **Relish** the moments of the day that went well and all the gives you have received in this day.
2. **Request** that the Spirit hear you as you review the day.
3. **Review** the day. Some think of the day as unfolding like a movie in your imagination.
4. **Repen**t of any mistakes or failures, recognized or unrecognized, of this day.
5. **Resolve** to live tomorrow well, including any concrete things you would like to do.

Mark Thibodeux's book has many variations on this basic idea. Fellow Jesuit James Martin, SJ uses these 5 steps instead:

1. **Presence** – recognizing the presence of God. This could be as simple as saying to yourself, "God is here," or "I am in the presence of God.
2. **Gratitude** – starting with thanksgiving slows down our tendency to rush to the negative or to problem-solve.
3. **Review** – review of the day from start to finish. You could ask yourself some questions like: When did I feel close to God?" or "Who showed me love?"
4. **Sorrow** – here you ask questions like "where was I selfish today?" or "where did I do something I am not happy about?"
5. **Grace** – here you ask for God's help for what will happen in the next 24 hours.

Gratitude Examen

This is perhaps the simplest way to do this simple prayer: Look at the whole day from the lens of gratitude. This version was taught to me by Matthew Linn, SJ:

1. Recognize the presence of God with you as you make this prayer.
2. Ask yourself: "What was I grateful for today?"
3. Ask yourself: "What was I not so grateful for today."

You can also tailor your examen to particular concerns. Here is an **Ecological Examen** by Joseph Carver, SJ:

1. All creation reflects the beauty and blessing of God's image. Where was I most aware of this today?

2. Can I identify and pinpoint how I made a conscious effort to care for God's creation during this day?
3. What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation?
4. How can I repair breaks in my relationship with creation, in my unspoken sense of superiority?
5. As I imagine tomorrow, I ask for the grace to see the Incarnate Christ in the dynamic interconnections of all Creation.

Here are also a couple of technological aids for the examen:

1. App from Loyola Press for the Examen: (Apple App Store, there is probably a version for other phones as well) https://apps.apple.com/us/app/reimagining-the-examen/id1065042173
2. A YouTube video version guiding you through the prayer. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAFbD5jCGNI

Lastly, the poem "Questions Before Dark" by Jeanne Lohmann is a poetic way to imagine an Examen before sleep.
https://www.ayearofbeinghere.com/2015/07/jeanne-lohmann-questions-before-dark.html

What is the best Examen – the one you do, daily.

Selected Sources:
James Martin, *Learning to Pray: A Guide for Everyone,* 2021.
Mark E. Thibodeux, *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen*, 2014.

A NOTE ABOUT MEDITATION WITH SCRIPTURE

Throughout the *Spiritual Exercises* you will be invited to interact with biblical texts in several ways.

Unless otherwise noted, use whatever translation or edition of the Bible you like. I generally prefer the New Revised Standard Edition, Updated Edition. However, you may also want to consult several translations or editions and reflect on how the differences speak to you. You can easily do that using Bible Gateway (https://www.biblegateway.com). I also commend to you the *First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament*, for a unique perspective.

When you are offered a scripture passage for your daily exercise, you might consider reading the scripture passage out loud, rather than simply reading it silently. Speaking the words brings them into your body, both through your mouth and throat and through your ears as you hear yourself say them. It also involves your breath.

The two primary ways you will interact with scripture in these *Exercises* is through the practice of *lectio divina* (sacred reading) and Ignatian contemplation (using spiritual imagination to enter the story). We'll discuss Ignatian contemplation more later.

If you are familiar with *lectio divina*, feel free to use the format that is comfortable for you. If you are new to *lectio divina*, this is a practice of contemplative praying with scripture. This is not Bible study, but an opportunity to listen for how Spirit is speaking to you through the words of the text. You read the passage several times, with silent meditation in between. Each time has a specific focus. Here is a simple format for *lectio divina*, reading the text 4 times:

1. Just let the words wash over you.
2. Listen for the word or phrase that jumps out at you or stays with you and reflect on that in the time of silent meditation.
3. Listen again for the word or phrase that shimmers for you, see if there are any others you notice in this reading. In the time of silent meditation reflect on how that word or phrase connects with your life.
4. After this reading, reflect on whether there is any invitation for you in this passage.

Another option for *lectio* is to use a practice adapted from *Praying in Color*. Copy the words for the first reading. Read it for the second reading and circle (perhaps in colored pencil) the word or phrase that shimmers for you. In the silent meditation after the third and fourth readings, rewrite the words and draw or doodle around them as you reflect on their connection to your life. Writing the words, like speaking, brings the words more deeply into your body.

Selected Sources:
Sybil McBeth, *Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God*, 2007.
Christine Valters Paintner, *Lectio Divina: The Sacred Art*, 2011.
Terry M. Wildman, *First Nations Version*: *An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament*, 2021.

In the Beginning . . . Part One

"*In the beginning was the Word,*
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . .
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."
- John 1:1, 14a

In her book, *Church of the Wild*, Victoria Loorz discusses the opening of the Gospel of John at length. It's a bit like a convoluted 2,500-year-old detective story.

John's Gospel was originally written down in Greek. The Greek word usually and historically translated in English as "word" is *logos.* In the 5th century BCE, *logos* was used to describe "a kind of intelligent life force embedded in and interconnecting all things." (Loorz, 106). However, our English translation didn't originally come directly from the Greek, but from a Latin translation of the Greek. And here's where the plot gets murky.

Up until the 4th Century, Roman church authorities translated *logos* into Latin, the language of the church, as *sermo*. *Sermo* means "conversation." Loorz suggests replacing every instance of "Word" or "word" in your English translation of John chapter 1 as "conversation."

"In the beginning was the Conversation,
And the Conversation was with God, and the Conversation was God ….
The Conversation became flesh and dwelt among us."

Makes a big difference, doesn't it? Sit with it a moment. "Conversation" is relational, implies speaking and listening, giving and receiving. Reciprocity of communication.

However, in the 4th century, St. Jerome translated the whole Bible into Latin, in an edition called the Vulgate. He translated *logos* as *verbum*, meaning "word." It was no longer a conversation between, it was a singular word, THE word, or Word. This translation supported the authority, the singular authority of THE Church in Rome.

Jerome's translation went unquestioned until over a thousand years later. In the 16th century, the same century when Ignatius was composing his *Spiritual Exercises*, a man named Erasmus, a committed Catholic scholar, retranslated the Gospel of John from the original Greek and discovered that *logos* should have been translated as *sermo* not *verbum.*

Yes, the Roman Catholic Church, already dealing with the Protestant Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin, freaked out. Ten years after the death of Erasmus, the Roman Catholic Church official condemned the work of Erasmus and ordered all copies of his translation burned.

Despite scholarship revealing this history, modern English translations still use "Word" for *logos*. It's now tradition.

Source: Victoria Loorz, *Church of the Wild*, 2021.

In the Beginning . . . Part Two

"*When God began to create the heavens and the earth,*
the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep,
while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.
Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.
And God saw that the light was good,
and God separated the light from the darkness.
God called the light Day, and the darkness God called Night.
And there was evening and there was morning, the first day."
- Genesis 1:1-5 (NRSVUE adapted)

"What if beginning—
this beginning, any beginning, The Beginning—
does not lie back, like an origin,
but rather opens out?"
- Catherine Keller

In *The Face of the Deep*, Catherine Keller poetically argues against the idea that God created the universe from nothing. Instead, both the biblical creation story in Genesis 1 and the modern scientific creation story describe creation from chaos, from darkness.

Traditionally that chaos and darkness was seen as evil, with the Spirit of God creating order, and thus goodness, out of chaos. But as Karen Baker-Fletcher writes: "A careful reading of Genesis does not associate the formlessness, emptiness, darkness, the deep, or the waters with evil. We are simply informed that they were present." They were there, and God was there, in the beginning. And the darkness didn't go away once God added light; they both continued to exist—side by side.

Of course, this must be so. The darkness of the beginning is the darkness of the womb. The beginning of Genesis 1 is a beginning that was, and is, a becoming, instead of a singular "origin."

"'To begin'", Keller writes, "derives from the old Teutonic *be-ginnan*, "to cut open, to open up," cognate with the Old English *ginan*, meaning 'to gape, to yawn,' as a mouth or an abyss (OED). We gape back. We make brilliant machines for gaping. They inscribe a universe that appears to open endlessly. Indeed, its speed of expansion now seems, stunningly, to be accelerating—as though replaying the initial surge into materialization called the Big Bang. Or more suitably: the Big Birth."

The Genesis 1 creation story is a birth story, writes Baker-Fletcher, a story "about the nativity of the earth and its creatures," including human beings.

What does it mean for us, that God/Spirit created, and continues to create, out of chaos and darkness?

Selected Sources:
Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*, 1998.
Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming*, 2003.

“Origin” by Lynn Ungar

In the beginning the world
was a great big mess
Topsy-turvy, helter-skelter,
the grandest celestial
mish mosh of time and space.
Creation is the imposition of order:
light from dark, day from night
water from air and so on.
Sometimes it works.
Sometimes your carefully crafted
plans tick down the rails of your decisions,
running neatly on time. Sometimes not.
Creation is a blessing.
The careful construction of beauty
and the delicate elucidation of truth
is a blessing. Bending this malleable world
toward justice and peace
and your vision of what could be
is a blessing. But.
The nature of the universe
is chaos. Never forget
where you came from.

—6/5/22

lynnungar.com

Preparation Weeks
Week 02 – Love

"We love because God first loved us."
- 1 John 4:19

"*Experience of God's love is crucial. . . .*
Religious belief is trust in the God revealed through *experience.*
The believer does not have faith in the experience, but in whom is revealed through it.
But the medium of revelation is experience.
This does not mean 'religious' experience.
It means ordinary experience: the revelation of God's liberating love comes to us in the ordinary round of our lives …
This love comes in and through the fabric of our lives;
it does not come from above, or apart from, or as indifferent to our lives.
If it is revelation of God's love, to us,
then it has to be imbedded, embodied, ingredient in our lives, our experience."
- Sallie McFague

If indeed "God is love" as is written in 1 John 4, then it makes sense to begin an exploration of the Holy One's presence in our lives by exploring our own experience of love; love experienced in the ordinary fabric of our lives; love given and received not just from human beings but from the more-than-human world, from objects, from the earth.

It is generally better to read the instructions for the day over fully before beginning the exercise. Remember that you can journal as you go through the exercise or wait until after you complete it, whichever works best for you. Don't forget to continue with your Daily Examen and to briefly reflect back on your prayer time after you have completed the exercise.

Intention: To be open to receive and experience God's love.

2.1 [EF 1, 7, 8]
Reflect: What is your earliest memory of receiving love? Accept whatever moment comes to you; don't over think it ("Is that really my earliest?" "Does that really count as 'love'?"). Bring up the memory in as much detail as you can. Are there any sounds associated with that memory? Any smells? Any tastes? What do you see? What feelings come up as you recall that memory? If no memory comes to mind, think of a time when you wish you had received love, and retell the story the way you wish it had happened, as if you had received love there.
Practice: Write the story of the memory that comes to you. Then read it to yourself (preferably out loud; if you have an iPhone or other recording device you might consider recording yourself reading it). What arises in you as you listen to your story? Does any part of the story shimmer for you?
Closing: Breath Prayer for around a minute, BIBOLOVE (breath in LOVE, breath out LOVE), slowly, paying attention to how it feels in your body to inhale and exhale

2.2 [EF 1, 7, 8]
Reflect: Is there a song or a piece of music that you associate with love? Perhaps it is a lullaby, or a favorite hymn or love song? What music comes to mind when you think about love? If none comes to mind, stick with it. Accept whatever comes.
Practice: *Audio divina* (sacred hearing). If you can, listen to the music that came to you in the reflection. If no specific musical piece or song came to you, chose a favorite piece of music. Listen to it using a process similar to *lectio divina*. Listen to it 4 times, with some silence in between.

1. Just let the music wash over you.
2. Listen for the musical phrase or lyric (if it has lyrics) that shimmers for you.
3. What memory of love is connected to this music or how might the musical phrase or lyric connect or speak to your life right now.
4. What might be the invitation in this music for you?

Closing: 5 minutes silent meditation

2.3 [EF 1, 8]
Reflect: Who are the people, beings or objects, who have shown you love?
Practice: Make a list in your journal of every name that comes to mind. Read the list over slowly and prayerfully. Do any of the names jump out at you from that list? You may wish to create a piece of art (for example a SoulCollage™ card) to represent that person, being, or thing. Another option would be to contemplatively walk around your home, and select an object that represents that person, being or object for you. Alternatively, you may wish to use the *Praying in Color* method (https://prayingincolor.com) to make a prayer doodle/icon with all the names on your list (write each name and spend time doodling in colored pencil or marker around each one). Place your art or object on your altar.
Closing: "You Have Always Been Enough" by Lynn O'Brien
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SCCB422ZUU

2.4
Open: The image "Madonna" (handout)
Practice: Gaze upon the image for a few moments. What do you notice? Now use your imagination to place yourself in the image. Imagine that you are the baby. What is it like to lie there in those arms? What is it like to gaze up at that face? What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? Let yourself rest there for a few moments. How do you feel? What arises in you as you let yourself rest there? Does this image trigger any memories?
Continue gazing at the image as you listen to "All One Heart" by Melanie DeMore
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpmjLB48MNg
Closing: Breathe this prayer several times: (INHALE) "Like a baby content in its mother's arms," (EXHALE) "my soul is a baby content." (Psalm 131:2b, The Message).

2.5 [EF 1, 7, 8]
Read: "Experience: I let a baby bird nest in my hair for 84 days," *The Guardian*
https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/mar/25/experience-i-let-a-baby-bird-nest-in-my-hair?fbclid=IwAR3lkdTVFtlRJw7hvDHKT3UcCmjP122O3qOOMbGJUWtw2V1dAaNiTYPEXUc

Read: “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love . . . . So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.” (1 John 4:7-8, 16).
Reflect: Bring to mind a time when you showed love.
Practice: Write the story of that experience of showing love. Then read it to yourself (preferably out loud; if you have an iPhone or other recording device you might consider recording yourself reading it). What arises in you as you listen to your story? Does any part of the story shimmer for you?
Closing: “Love Moves in Me” – Heather Houston (remember that you can sing along, or just listen)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBnaDHMq-RA

2.6
Read: Ignatian Repetition (handout)
Practice: Repeat one of the days this week.

2.7
Savor the graces of the week
- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.
- Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources:
Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant*, 2000.

Figure 1. *Modern Madonna. Source:* Christine Ng

IGNATIAN REPETITION

Ignatius understood that just as physical exercises like running are good for the body, so his Exercises are good for the soul (SE 1). We now know that is a false distinction: Physical exercises also affect our mental and spiritual well-being and our mental or emotional state affects our physical state. We are one "bodymindspirit." (Medina & Gonzalez, 23) However, the analogy to physical exercise is still a useful one.

When one wants to learn or excel at a particular activity, whether a creative one such as dance or drawing or a sport like basketball or golf, the most important thing to is to practice. It is through the repetition of practice that skills are honed, and the experience can sink into our bodies. We develop what is called "muscle memory," and the activity becomes easier, more natural.

So it is that in the *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius recommends "repetition" of previous exercises. Along the way, you will be prompted to repeat an exercise that spoke to you from the week. Also, at the end of each week, and at the end of each phase or "Week," you will also be prompted to return to any particularly fruitful exercise from that period. You may also feel internal promptings to return or linger longer with a particular exercise before moving onto another.

Ignatius instructs that in these repetitions the object is not to repeat the exercise from scratch, but instead to return to areas that had the most emotion or energy for you. Go back and look again at the scripture, image, idea, attraction, resistance, or any other interior movement that was particularly strong for you. Spiraling back in this way gives you the opportunity to go deeper and gain greater insight.

Repetitions serve another function as well. They simplify our prayer and intentionally slow progress through the *Exercises* down to allow you to linger where you have felt Spirit moving most strongly. Ignatius reminds us that what most satisfies the soul isn't knowing a lot, gaining more insights, or even just getting through the exercises, but savoring the graces offered and resting in the arms of the Divine. Kevin O'Brien, SJ writes that "making a repetition of prayer is like spending more time with someone we love." (O'Brien, 61)

Selected Sources:
David J. Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship,* 1996.
Lara Medina & Martha Gonzales, *Voices of the Ancestors,* 2019.
Kevin O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 2011.

Preparation Weeks
Week 03 – Body of God

"*The earth is God's and all that is in it,*
The world, and those who live in it"
- Psalm 24:1

"The model that comes to mind as we think about God and the world in the new creation story is not 'the king and his realm' but the 'universe as God's body.'"
- Sallie McFague

"The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw—and knew I saw—
all things in God and God in all things."
- Mechtild of Magdeburg

"*We have an origin, but we don't always know it.*
Is it wild?
What if where we come from doesn't fit who we are now?...
Our shared origin is a living earth that's part of the universe that holds everyone."
- Heidi Barr

Intention: To be open to the presence of the Holy One in the more-than-human world and in myself.

3.1 [EF 1, 6, 7, 8]
Reflect: What is your earliest memory of nature or of encountering nature? Bring up the memory in as much detail as you can. Are there any sounds associated with that memory? Any smells? Any tastes? What do you see? What feelings come up as you recall that memory? Welcome whatever comes.
Practice: Write the story of that first experience of nature. Then read it to yourself. What arises in you as you reread and listen to your story? Does any part of the story shimmer for you?
Closing: "Creation Calls" by Brian Doerrksen
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28sqs5H5hao

3.2 [EF 6, 7, 8]
Read: Contemplative Walking (handout)
Read: Isaiah 55:12
And/or Listen: "The Trees of the Field"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=miyEa5ZhvSA
Practice: Take a contemplative walk, preferably outside, for at least 15-20 minutes.
Closing: 5 minutes of quiet stillness

3.3 [EF 2, 6, 8]
Read: Ecostory (handout)

Practice: Write your ecostory as it comes to you today. You might write it again tomorrow and remember different details; this is contemplative storytelling. Remember that stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end – but don't necessarily have to be told in that order. Go as far back into your history and the history of your family as feels right to you. Read it to yourself, or record yourself reading it and play it back. What do you notice?
Closing: Breath prayer (breath in – This is my story; breath out – I come home to myself)

3.4 [EF 1, 6]
Read: Job 12:7-10
Practice: *Lectio divina* on this scripture. Then introduce yourself to the piece of earth on which you now make your home and the others you share it with. If possible, walk around your yard, or around the building in which you live noticing and greeting each plant and creature you see. Touch the soil and greet the earth itself, the minerals and microscopic creatures that live in it. Look up and greet the sky and the clouds. If going outside is not possible, look out the window with focus and attention. Do all this in a sacred manner.
Closing: "The Earth is Full" by Darlene Franz
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6bdZrVYwKI

3.5 [EF 7]
Read: Psalm 139:7-14
Watch: "Hand Dance" – Cynthia Winton-Henry
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mO0fa6ZTDwQ
Practice: Spend 15-20 minutes drawing your hand with as much detail as you can. Draw one side or both, then make notes about the experience. It doesn't have to be a good drawing, it is the attention needed to see what needs to be drawn, rather than how well you reproduce it, that is the goal. Are there freckles or wrinkles? If there are scratches, bruises or scars do you remember how you got them? What story does your hand tell?
Closing: Do a one-hand dance. You can do it as a dance with your environment, as in the video, or sitting and moving your hand and arm only. Singing to accompany yourself (as in the video) or play a piece of music of your choice.

3.6
Practice: Repeat one of the days this week.

3.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.
- Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources:
Heidi Barr, *Collisions of Earth and Sky*, 2023.
Joanna Macy and Molly Brown, *Coming Back to Life: The Updated Guide To The Work The Reconnects*, 2014.
Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology,* 1993.

CONTEMPLATIVE WALKING

"*Wisdom atrophies if it is not walking on a regular basis.*"
- Barbara Brown Taylor

"*Paying attention is a form of reciprocity with the living world, receiving the gifts with open eyes and open heart.*"
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

"I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it,"
- Shug Avery, in *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

Walking as a spiritual practice has a long history in all of the world's great wisdom traditions. Whether that is walking in pilgrimage, or walking the labyrinth, or one of the many forms of walking meditation, walking is a spiritual practice accessible to most people. Contemplative walking is really about the practice of paying attention. It's not walking to get somewhere, or walking for exercise, or walking the dog, or walking to calm down after an argument with someone. It's walking with exquisite attention in order to notice and receive what Wisdom or Spirit has to show you. That attention can be focused on the act of walking itself or that attention can be focused on the environment in which you are walking.

The movement of walking facilitates an attitude of openness and encourages the deep wisdom held in your body to emerge. But because this practice is really about paying attention, it can be practiced sitting and giving your attention to how others walk, or by letting your eyes walk around the space you are in. Sometimes the spaces we pay the least attention to are the ones we see every day.

Start your walk with the intention to pay attention. Go slowly so you don't miss anything. You can go with a question on your heart or just leave it open. As you walk, notice what your senses are telling you. For example, what do you see; what catches your eye? What sounds rise to the top of your awareness? Do you notice any particular smells? How does the ground feel under your feet? Is the air warm or cool on your skin? Do you notice any particular feelings, thoughts or memories arising as you walk?

If your mind starts to wander, notice that and then gently refocus your attention. If you find yourself continually distracted, notice what thoughts are "distracting" you. Is there something there that needs your attention?

You can practice contemplative walking anywhere. In your yard, at the mall, in your house, at the beach. You may find it easier or more challenging to pay attention in some locations than others. Walking a labyrinth, if one is available nearby, can be particularly powerful.

As you progress through these Spiritual Exercises, you may want to try first reading the daily exercise, then going for a walk as you reflect on it, and journaling when get back. You can also do your daily Examen while walking. Find the rhythm that works for you.

Selected Sources:
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013.
Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith,* 2009.

YOUR ECOSTORY

"And as they migrated from the east,
they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there."
- Genesis 11:2

"It took time for me to accept that where *we are has as much to do with formation*
as with whom *and* during what*.*
Place is the one thing that always is.
We are always somewhere."
- Cole Arthur Riley

"*All that you touch*
You Change.
All that you Change
Changes you.
The only lasting truth
is Change.
God is Change."
— Octavia E. Butler

We all have an ecostory, individually and collectively. It is the story of how we came to be in **this** place, **this** land, **this** location on planet Earth. But it is not only our personal, individual story; it is the story of our family, our people, our ancestors. If, as modern science tells us, all humans came originally from Africa, the story of all humankind is indeed the story of migration.

We humans pick up and move. We wander in the wilderness. Sometimes we settle, grow roots deep into the land, make it our home where we live, grow food, raise our children, bury our dead for generations. Then we pick up and move again, voluntarily or involuntarily becoming immigrants, settlers, colonizers. The Bible is one migration story after another; even Jesus was always on the move, traveling from place to place. All along the way, we interact with our environment; we change it and it changes us. So our human story is not just our story, it is the story of the Earth, the land, and the other beings with which we share it.

Whenever we move from a place we have truly made our home something is shorn, relationships are severed. It is a kind of trauma, a "land trauma." We carry the memory of that land in our very cells. A child of Cuban immigrants to the United States, Kat Armas, writes: "It's an odd thing to feel nostalgia for land you've never lived on, but if we've learned anything from our ancestors in Scripture and beyond: the land lives within us. My soul remembers the familiar rhythms of my island, and I can feel the congas and my heart beating as one." (Armas, 18) It is a kind of "ecomemory," our individual and collective memory of the earth and our relationship to it. Ecomemory is passed down through generations, a part of our family and communal heritage, but it does not rely solely on objective facts or history, but also on emotions, sights, sounds, touch and smell.

What's your ecostory? Mine includes families who came to the U.S. from various places in the British Isles over a span of years from before the American Revolution to the early part of the twentieth century. One ecomemory from my family is about my maternal grandmother who was raised on a farm in Pennsylvania, on land that had been in her mother's family for generations. When she married and moved to New Jersey farm country, she didn't know how to prepare and cook the vegetables that grew there. The first time my grandfather brought home asparagus for dinner, she cut off and threw away the tops of the stalks and cooked the tough fibrous bottoms. She and my grandfather built a house, but my grandmother never farmed or even really gardened on that land. She knew it wasn't hers. She became a school teacher, and her kids brought her vegetables. They moved to Florida when they retired, stayed inside in the air conditioning, watched TV and played Bridge; though my grandfather tried to grow roses with only moderate success.

My ecostory also includes my own experience of living through hurricanes, climbing sea grape and banyon trees, wading at low tide in tidal pools on long days spent at the beach and the sound of waves lapping the shore at night. It includes flying roaches (aka "Palmetto bugs"), termites, and mosquito bites. It also includes memories of shutting up all the windows to keep out the insecticide sprayed by trucks and planes to kill those mosquitoes lest we breathe it in or let it coat our food. It includes the smell of decomposing seaweed washed up on the shore after a storm, the mango tree in my backyard I couldn't go near because I would break out in a nasty rash, and the taste of fish caught that very same day. My ecostory includes sunburn and the first time I saw snow when I went to college. My ecostory traces my experiences with the land living in Florida and Pennsylvania and Texas and now New Mexico. It speaks to me of how the high desert called to me. It includes the company of blue herons and sea gulls, the singing of coyotes, the caw of ravens, and the chittering of hummingbirds. It includes feeling like my heart was being ripped from my chest every time I drove away from the land I had lived on for the last time.

What's your ecostory? What is the story of you, your family, your ancestors told from the perspective of your relationship to the land? What land did they live on, how did they change the land, and how did the land change them? What ecomemories can you mine from your own experience and your familial, communal and ancestral experience? How did that journey lead to where you live right now? Who have you shared this journey with; what other beings have a part in your story? Naming this can be a step in connecting, or reconnecting with the land, creating a sense of place, putting down spiritual roots, or perhaps just recognizing and acknowledging the roots you have already sunk deep into the soil beneath your feat.

Selected Sources:
Melanie Harris, *Ecowomanism: African-American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths*, 2017.
Re-Imagining Migration, https://reimaginingmigration.org/the-story-of-migration-is-the-story-of-humankind/
Kat Armas, *Abuelita Faith: What Women on the Margins Teach Us About Wisdom, Persistance, and Strength*, 2021.
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013.

Carol Lee Sanchez, “Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral: The Sacred Connection” in Carol J. Adams, ed., *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, 1993.
Lenore Three Stars in *With Creation: A Native and Indigenous Lenten Devotional*. Unbound, 2023.
Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation and the Stories That Make Us*, 2022.

Preparation Weeks
Week 04 – Presence

"Concretizing our spiritual lives through words and image,
and in turn, spiritualizing our material lives,
allows us to paint a fuller picture of our realities."
- Irene Lara and Elisa Facio

*"The most difficult word to use is **God**.*
When I use the word God I am referring to a cluster of images
[for] that which is Divine and Sacred,
and within what is experienced as divine and sacred.
The image 'God' is only one of endless possibilities:
Goddess, Mystery, Spirit, Sacred, Holy, or other metaphors.
Each is a distinct metaphor referring to particular experiences."
- Heather Eaton

Intention: To be open to the presence of God.

4.1 [EF 8]
Reflect: Remember a specific time when you felt particularly close to the Holy One? It could be a time when you were aware of God/Spirit presence in the moment, or perhaps it was only looking back that you realized it. Bring up the memory in as much detail as you can. Where were you at the time? What were you doing? Was anyone with you? What about that moment made you aware of the presence of God/Spirit? Are there any sounds associated with that memory? Any smells? Any tastes? What do you see? What physical or emotional feelings come up as you recall that memory? If no memory comes to you, just sit quietly for a while and then write about whatever comes.
Practice: Write the story of your memory of that experience or if no memory came to you today write the story of whatever did arise for you. Then read it to yourself. What arises in you as you listen to your story? Does any part of the story shimmer for you?
Closing: "Baba Yetu (The Lord's Prayer in Swahili)" – Stellenbosch University Choir
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCa8RxaOPW8

4.2 [EF 1, 7, 8]
Read: *"We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been—a place half-remembered, and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. . . . Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free."* (Starhawk)
Reflect: What has been such a "home" for you in your life?
Practice: Imagine yourself in that "home," within those loving arms, that circle of friends, in that place of healing where you are free to be your true self. How does it feel in your body?
Closing: "Safe in the Arms of Love" – Martina McBride
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lRCqTgx4GS4

4.3
Reflect: Is there an image, story, place, music, or metaphor that you associate with God/Spirit or that helps you feel closer to the Holy One?
Practice: Engage creatively with whatever came to you in your reflection using poetry, collage or other visual art. If music comes to you in your reflection, you might sing or dance to it and journal about anything that came to you as you sang or danced.
Closing: Breath prayer of your choice.

4.4
Practice: Repeat one of the previous days of this week (4.1-4.3)

4.5 [EF 8]
Reflect: Remember a specific time when you felt God/Spirit was distant, or you felt separate or alienated from the Holy One. Bring up the memory in as much detail as you can. Where were you at the time? What were you doing? Was anyone with you? What about that moment made you aware of the presence of God/Spirit or made you feel that God/Spirit was absent? Are there any sounds associated with that memory? Any smells? Any tastes? What do you see? What physical or emotional feelings come up as you recall that memory? If no memory comes to you, just sit quietly for a while and then write about whatever comes.
Practice: Write the story of your memory of that experience or if no memory came to you today write the story of whatever did arise for you. Then read it to yourself. What arises in you as you listen to your story? Does any part of the story shimmer for you?
Closing: "Circle Me" – Jeff Johnson
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fts8sDKzg18

4.6
Read: Mark 10:17-27
Practice: *Lectio divina*
Reflect: Is there something that keeps you from experiencing the presence of the Divine or from feeling free to respond to God/Spirit's invitations?
Closing: "Free, Free, Free" – Melanie DeMore (You are invited to participate along with the audience)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIoOaLRwedo

4.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.
- Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources:
Heather Eaton. *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 2005.
Elisa Facio & Irene Lara. *Fleshing the Spirit*, 2014.
Starhawk, quoted in "Gaiam Life," http://blog.gaiam.com

Preparation Weeks
Week 05 – Principle and Foundation

"I am love, of love, for love."
- Jacqueline S. Bergan & Sister Marie Schwan

"*Spirituality includes the profound understanding that we are not alone,*
'that we are spiritual beings in physical bodies,'
cocreators of this world,
connected to one another and to the Source of all."
- Lara Medina and Martha R. Gonzales

This is the last week in the time of Preparation. It therefore concludes not just with of a review of this week, but a review of all the Preparation Weeks.

Intention: to grow in interior freedom to respond to the call of God/Spirit in my life; to become more aware of those unhealthy attachments that interfere with a loving relationship to God, others, or myself.

5.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 5]
Read: Inner Freedom and Relationship (handout)
Read: Romans 7:15
Reflect: *What does this line from scripture bring up for you? Can you recall times when you felt distracted or pulled off the path you had meant to walk? You may want to art journal this.*
Closing: Breath prayer by Cole Arthur Riley – (INHALE) This body holds memory, (EXHALE) I approach with tenderness.

5.2 [EF 1, 2, 3]
Read: Galatians 5:1
Reflect: *What does this line from scripture bring up for you? What does "freedom" mean for you today?*
Closing: "Prayers for Freedom" – MaMuse
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfKKQOBotqk

5.3 [EF 1, 2, 3]
Read: Philippeans 4:10-14
Practice: *Lectio divina*
Read: Principle and Foundation Part 1 (handout)
Reflect: *Journal what comes up in response*
Closing: 5 minutes of silent meditation

5.4
Read: Principle and Foundation Part 2 (handout)
Reflect: Which version spoke most to you? Can you articulate why?

Practice: Write your own Principle and Foundation. If you can't finish a draft of it today, you can continue to work on it tomorrow.
Closing: Pray with your preferred version of the Principle and Foundation from the handout.

5.5
Practice: Reread your own Principle and Foundation and keep working with it until it feels complete for now.
Read: Your own Principle and Foundation to yourself.
Practice: *Lectio Divina*
Closing: "Nature: South Carolina Falls" (you can watch it, it's lovely, or just sit back and close your eyes and listen)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFX1HCcpyig

5.6
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.
- Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

5.7
Prayerfully review your journal for the Preparation Weeks. What stands out for you? What do you notice? Where did you feel that you were moving towards God/Spirit? Where did you feel you were moving away? How do you feel about proceeding into the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises?*
Closing: "Patient Trust" by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/prayer-of-theilhard-de-chardin/

Selected Sources:
Jaqueline Syrup Bergan and Sister Marie Schwan, *Love: A Guide for Prayer*, 2011.
Lara Medina and Martha R. Gonzales, "Introduction," *Voices of the Ancestors, Xicanx and Latinx Spiritual Expressions and Healing Practices, 2019.*

Inner Freedom and Relationship

"*Any habit that helps us avoid authentic engagement with God is a form of unhealthy attachment*."
- Venita Hampton Wright

A key concept of Ignatian Spirituality is that of spiritual, inner, or interior freedom. Indeed, Ignatius saw developing that freedom as one of the primary purposes of the *Exercises* (SE 1). Ignatius used a word for this freedom that is typically translated as "indifference." By that, he did not mean lack of interest or concern, on the contrary. As Ignatius saw God in all things, we are meant to treat all things, all beings, as the gifts of life worthy of our concern.

At the same time, if we hold onto something too tightly, if we are too attached to it, if it has too great an importance in our lives, that may prevent us from being fully open to God/Spirit. In Ignatian terms, it becomes a "disordered attachment," in biblical terms we might call it an "idol"—something that has become more important to us than God or God's call on our life. Disordered attachments are distractions that hook us and pull us off the path we want to walk with God.

We all have them. Paul's statement in Romans 7:15 suggests such a disordered attachment in his life. Some of these attachments may be unavoidable depending on one's life situation. "Can a woman working in a sweat shop in Bangladesh give energy to anything except surviving and feeding her children?" (Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, 83) Despite all our best intentions and deepest desires, sometimes the disordered systems of the world in which we live constrain us. Whatever their source, they are a kind of bondage.

Spiritual freedom, from an Ignatian and ecofeminist point of view, is very different from the Western, individualistic idea of freedom. It is the true freedom to live into our best selves, into the truth that we are part of a web of relationships with the Sacred and all of Creation.

The Disney classic movie *Pinocchio*, could be a parable of true freedom. The title character begins life as a puppet, controlled by strings that make him appear alive. His creator, the toymaker Geppetto, wishes upon a star that Pinocchio could be a real boy, and his puppet comes to life. At one point, he sings proudly, "I've got no strings to hold me down/to make me fret or make me frown/I had strings, but now I'm free/there are no strings on me." The first time he sings it, he falls flat on his face. He continues to experience one disaster after another, until he realizes Geppetto is in danger because of him and risks his life to save him. Because of that, Geppetto's wish is granted, and Pinocchio is brought to life not as a stringless puppet but as a "real boy."

Ignatius' idea of spiritual freedom includes cutting the strings that "hold us down," the disordered attachments that control or enslave us. Those could be addictions, or other unhealthy habits or emotions. These often develop because of past experiences and may initially have been survival mechanisms but are no longer life-giving. Now instead of keeping us safe, these patterns and responses only keep us from healthy, honest, and authentic relationships with God, with others, and with ourselves.

But cutting those strings does not mean we live without attachments of any kind. It is not an all or nothing situation. Not only do we need healthy attachments and relationships in our lives, but we are interconnected and interdependent beings, whether we want to be or not. We have relationships with family, friends, co-workers; we are dependent on the doctors who save our lives in the hospital, the teachers who we learned from in school, the electrician who makes sure the wiring in our homes is safe; we are in relationship with those we help along the way. Freedom is not about whether or not we have attachments, but whether they are healthy, life-giving, compassionate attachments, whether they are of Love.

Ignatius understood that our fundamental connection and relationship is to a loving God. So, true inner freedom is the freedom not only **from** disordered attachments, but the freedom **to** respond to the Divine call in our lives, instead of being held back. From an ecofeminist perspective, we must also understand this to mean that we as humans are deeply connected with our environment and radically dependent on the earth and the others with whom we share this world. Inner freedom, then, is the freedom to dance within this web of relationships, without being controlled by any unhealthy attachments. It is the freedom to be fully human, dancing to the divine music of the universe.

Selected Sources:

Walt Disney, *Pinocchio* (1940), song lyrics by Ned Washington.
Elizabeth Liebert & Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed, 2nd ed.,* 2022.
Venita Hampton Wright, "What Is An Unhealthy Attachment," *IgnatianSpirituality.com*, accessed August 31, 2024, https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/what-is-an-unhealthy-attachment/

PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION – Part 1

In SE 23, at the threshold of the First Week or phase of the *Exercises*, Ignatius presents a statement of purpose that provides a foundation for all that is to come. Called the "Principle and Foundation," or by its Latin name *Fundamentum*, it is perhaps the most heavily theologically weighted element of the *Exercises* and reflects the male-centered and human-centered worldview of Ignatius and his time.

However, this purpose statement serves to ground the one making the *Exercises* in core truths, attitudes, and experiences: God/Spirit's love for us as experienced in our life; the sacredness of all creation; our relationship and connection with the universe and the world in which we live; our gratitude for the gifts of life; our willingness to be open and to share our innermost thoughts, feelings and desires with the Holy One; our deepest desire to grow ever closer to the Source of love and the desire to have the inner spiritual freedom to align ourselves with that love so that we may respond with love in return. The exercises in these Preparation Weeks have been walking you through these elements.

Despite the doctrinal language, Ignatius' Principle and Foundation is really an invitation for imaginative spiritual play. Can we imagine what it would be like if we were totally free to live out our deepest desires to follow the call of the Holy One for us? What would it be like to listen to Spirit speaking through our deepest desires, instead of the voices of the world telling us we are not "good enough"? What would it be like to hold onto that as we move through the *Exercises* and through our lives?

Principle and Foundation – Part 2

Here are Ignatius' original Principle and Foundation and a few contemporary reframings of it.

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lor, and by this means to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created.
From this it follows that man is to use them as much as they help him on to his end, and ought to rid himself of them so far as they hinder him as to it.
For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health, rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created.

- Ignatius of Loyola, SE 23d
Translated by David L. Fleming SJ

God who loves us creates us and wants to share life with us forever. Our love response takes shape in our praise and honor and service of the God of our life.

All the things in this world are also created because of God's love and they become a context of gifts, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we show reverence for all the gifts of creation and collaborate with God in using them so that by being good stewards we develop as loving persons in our care for God's world and its development. But if we abuse any of these gifts of creation or, on the contrary, take them as the center of our lives, we break our relationship with God and hinder our growth as loving persons.

In everyday life, then we must hold ourselves in balance before all created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some responsibility. We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a more loving response to our life forever with God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this. I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening life in me.

- David L. Fleming, SJ

Lord my God, when Your love spilled over into creation You thought of me.
I am from love, of love, for love.
Let my heart, O God, always recognize, cherish, and enjoy Your goodness in all of creation.
Direct all that is me toward your praise.
Teach me reverence for every person, all things.
Energize me in Your service.
Lord God may nothing ever distract me from Your love…neither health nor sickness, wealth nor poverty, honor nor dishonor, long life nor short life.
May I never seek nor choose to be other than You intend or wish.

- Jacqueline Syrup Bergan & Sister Marie Schwan

God of Creation,
Love is who You are.
Love is what You do.
You are Love Loving.
You formed this world in love
and fashioned us for love.
Every created thing invites us
to recognize Your love at work and
to make a response of love.
Let me be grounded in You, Loving God.
I am prone to lose Your lens of love
and mistake the means for the end.
Give me the freedom and awareness to not misuse all You have made.
May created things enable me to more deeply know You, the Creator.
Always remind me of Your foundational purposes
in the shifting circumstances of my life—
whether better or worse;
richer or poorer;
in or out of favor;
in sickness or in health.
Help me recognize that every moment is an opportunity to love.
By Your grace, may my loving resemble Yours,
and may I find my unique place in Your project of love.

- Oliver Goodrich & Lauren Schwer
Spiritual Grounding

Loving God, Source of life,
You breathe out your song of love
and all that is, all that was, all that will be
comes into being.
Your love song is the essence of who I am;
its rhythm my very heartbeat.
The tune resonates through me and all creation,
inviting us to join our own unique voices
to create Your evolving composition of love.
Teach me, O God,
to recognize Your love song in all creation,
that as my true voice grows stronger in love
I may better harmonize with the voices of others
in creative symphony.
Direct me, O God,
to help me keep to Your tempo in all circumstances,
when the playing is easy and when it is not.

Tune me to Your voice,
that I may hold onto the melodic thread
as I improvise my part.
Remind me, O God,
To be mindful of the dynamics, accidentals and key changes
along the Way.
May I never forget that yours is a love song
sung to me
and to all creation
that we may all be one.

- Christine Ng

Selected Sources

Jacqueline Bergen & S. Marie Schwan, *Love: A Guide for Prayer*, 2nd ed., 2011.
David L. Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship*, 1996.
Elizabeth Liebert & Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed, 2nd ed.*, 2022.
Tim Muldoon, "Postmodern Spirituality and the Ignatian *Fundamentum*," *The Way* 44/1 (January 2005).
Sacred Grounding, "My Life in God's Project," online Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*: https://www.spiritualgrounding.org/godsproject

First Week
Week 06 – What is Sin?

"I am love, of love, for love."
- Jacqueline Bergen & S. Marie Schwan

"*Biblical stories in the Exercises must first be critiqued before being retrieved."*
-Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

Don't forget to continue with your daily Examen. During the First Week, you may wish to focus on the consolation aspects of your days: What do you feel grateful for, when did you feel close to God, where did you experience love?

Intention: to reflect on my understanding and experience of sin while being held in the arms of Love.

6.1 [EF 1, 9]
Read: The First Week (handout)
Practice: Change your altar to reflect your intention for the First Week or phase of the *Exercises*. You may want to include objects or images that represent your experiences of Love.
Closing: Gaze at your altar and practice the breath prayer of your choice.

6.2
Read: "Have You Ever Tried to Enter the Long Black Branches?" by Mary Oliver
https://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/Poets/O/OliverMary/HaveYouEverT/index.html
Practice: *Lectio Divina*
Closing: *Visio Divina* with image "Doorway" by Julia Volk (handout)

6.3
Read: Genesis 2:4-3:24
Practice: *Lectio Divina*
Reflect: *What feelings arise in you as you read this story? Did anything surprise you? Did anything make you angry? Did any memories arise relating to this story?*
Watch: Brene Brown on Guilt and Shame
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSrXxqKfYwI
Closing: 5 minutes of silent meditation

6.4 [EF 1, 3, 6, 9]
Reread: Genesis 3:1-24
Read: "The 'Original' Sin" (handout)
Reflect: *As suggested in the handout.*
Closing: "Writing a Better Story" by Carrie Newcomer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOsE845bVIc

6.5 [EF 1, 3, 6]
Read: Excerpt from Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh* (handout)
Reflect: Does Cole Arthur Riley's perspective on the story change anything for you?
Closing: "God's Eyes" by MaMuse
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-FHLyndeAE

6.6
Repeat any day this week. Remember that for Ignatius repetition means continuing the work you did and going deeper, not simply doing the exercise over again.

6.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

First Week

"*The present dire situation calls for radicalizing the Christian understanding of sin and evil."*
- Sallie McFague

"Ecofeminism situates sin within the interlocking oppressions of ethnicity, colonialism, class, gender, and the domination of the earth. Sin exists where life cannot thrive."
- Heather Eaton

"*The loved sinner stands at the center of the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises*."
- Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

It must be said up front that, appearances to the contrary, the First Week (capital "W") or phase of the *Spiritual Exercises* isn't really about sin, it's about Love. The Preparation Weeks invited you to access your memories and experiences of love in different contexts and to connect them to your experiences of the Holy One who is Love, culminating in the affirmation of your own Principle and Foundation.

The First Week asks you to hold onto those memories and experiences of love/Love, and to your Principle and Foundation, as you journey into more difficult places—places of guilt, shame, or isolation; places where you felt separation from God/Spirit, human community, friends, family, or the earth; places of, to use Ignatius' theological language, sin.

From an ecofeminist theological perspective, sin is the failure of relationship; it is "the condition of humankind closed in upon itself." (McFague, 2021, 61) This is consistent with the principle that God/Spirit is relationship itself; the matrix within which all exists. Anything that breaks connection with or refuses to acknowledge the relatedness of all within that matrix of life is counter to God.

Sin can be individual, collective, societal, even global. In our individualistic Western culture, we mostly think about sin, when we think about it at all, as a list of individual, personal choices or "bad" behaviors. Think of the Ten Commandments or the "Seven Deadly Sins." My behavior is my choice, I alone am responsible, and if I just follow the rules, I don't have to worry about committing a "sin." This perspective "contributes to our collective apathy and indifference toward the suffering in our communities." (Lee, 130). Our individual, personal choices and actions have impacts far beyond ourselves, and knowingly or unknowingly we participate in the choices and actions of the communities of which we are a part. Sin is acting in a way that refuses to recognize the reality of our interconnectedness, breaking our trust and relationships to others in our family and friends, our local and global community, to the earth, and through all of those to the Divine.

In the First Week we are invited to explore sin in our lives and our world, but not for the purpose of punishment or self-flagellation. This phase of the *Exercises* begins with a more cosmic or archetypal view of sin, then moves to personal, communal, societal and global manifestations. We are asked to go into this difficult work with our eyes, hearts, and minds open, but not to go alone; we go wrapped in the warm cloak of Love. We look into these shadowed corners and

closets of our lives to find and feel God there, right there—loving us, forgiving us, helping us to have grace and compassion for ourselves and to begin the work of healing what has been broken in ourselves, our communities, our world. The First Week is a first step in that process.

Selected Sources

Heather Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 2005.
Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, 2002.
Cindy S. Lee, *Our Unforming*, 2022.
Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Pauin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed,* 2nd ed., 2022.
Sallie McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, 1993.
Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, 2021.

Figure 2. *Antique Doorway* by Julia Volk. *Source:* Free image available on pexels.com

The "Original" Sin

"*Eve ate the apple to regain her powers,*
to know what she knew before she got held hostage in the wrong garden."
- Eve Ensler

The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is an archetypal story not only of sin but of women, and has influenced, and continues to influence, our culture's understandings of both. Significantly, the story ties the two – women and sin – together. It is also the first biblical story Ignatius specifically assigns as a meditation in the *Exercises.* Therefore, it is important to wrestle with it, like Jacob wrestled with the "angel" later in the book of Genesis, until it gives up its blessing for us.

The first step is to read the story from the biblical text itself, perhaps in more than one translation. Many of the issues modern readers have with this story come not from the scripture itself but from the layers and layers of patriarchal interpretation placed on and around it and the characters in it, particularly Eve. The way this story has been used to justify the domination and oppression of women is arguably THE "original sin."

Try reading the text through a different lens, instead of the traditional patriarchal one. Since ecofeminist interpretation stresses relationship, what are the relationships in this story? How are they expressed? Since failure of relationship is our working ecofeminist definition of "sin," in what ways are those relationships broken? Or you could read the story from the perspective of plants or animals in the story.

Ask questions of the text and the traditional interpretation. For example, what if the "sin" here was not eating the fruit? What is the man's role in this story? Does this story tell us more about sin or about shame? Does the image of God in the text reflect the Holy One of your experience? If not, how might the story be retold to express that?

Here are some suggestions of ways the story could be interpreted differently. Reflect on any of them if they speak to you:

- The sin was eating the fruit, not because it was forbidden, but because they had so much abundance yet still had to have just one more that they didn't need. It was greed, coveting more when they had enough.
- The sin was not eating the fruit but was not believing that they were beloved just as they were. They did not need more knowledge to be worthy.
- Similar to the last, they were already in a paradise where God walked with them, side by side; a paradise that grew from Mother Earth and that provided for their every need.
- The sin was in hiding from God, placing something between themselves and God. They did not trust that God truly loved them.
- The Earth already existed when God made the Garden in the story. This was Father God's garden, a patriarchal construction, and they were trapped within it. This is not a story of sin but a story of liberation.

- Evil, in the form of the snake, was already in the Garden, as it is present in us. We all carry the potential for good and evil. Eating the fruit made them aware of that, which caused them great shame.
- The snake was not evil but was a manifestation of Eve's deep inner knowing about what she needed, which the patriarchy would see as a threat.

Selected Sources

Eve Ensler, "Eve's Revolution." Speech at Bioneers Conference, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXMu5j8aaQw
Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 2nd ed., 2022.
Kevin O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 2011.

Excerpt on Garden of Eden story in *This Here Flesh* by Cole Arthur Riley

On the day the world began to die, God became a seamstress. This is the moment in the Bible that I wish we talked about more often. When Eve and Adam eat from the tree, and decay and despair begin to creep in, when they learn to hide from their own bodies, when they learn to hide from each other—no one ever told me the story of a God who kneels and makes clothes out of animal skin for them.

I remember many conversations about the doom and consequence imparted by God after humans ate from that tree. I learned of the curses, too, and could maybe even recite them. But no one ever told me of the tenderness of this moment. It makes me question the tone of everything that surrounds it.

In the garden, when shame had replaced Eve's and Adam's dignity, God became a seamstress. He took the skin off of his creation to make something that would allow humans to stand in the presence of their maker and one another again. Isn't it strange that God didn't just tell Adam and Eve to come out of hiding and stop being silly, because he's the one who made them and has seen every part of them? He doesn't say that in the story, or at least we do not know if he did. But we do know that God went to great lengths to help them stand unashamed.

Sometimes you can't talk someone into believing their dignity. You do what you can to make a person feel unashamed of themselves, and you hope in time they'll believe in their beauty all on their own.

Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us,* 2022.

First Week
Week 07 – Sin and Grace

"She who goes about to reform the world
must begin with herself,
or she loses her labor."
-- Ignatius of Loyola (adapted)

This week explores two imaginative stories from the Gospels, two parables taught by Jesus, and invites you to contemplatively engage them with your own imagination and creativity. Remember this is not Bible study, so set aside what you may know about the authors or contexts of these two Gospels. What might Spirit have to say to you through these imaginative stories and your own imagination?

Don't forget to reflect back at the end of your daily time of prayer or meditation. The practice of repeatedly reflecting back allows new insights and connections to surface.

Intention: to develop a deeper understanding of sin and grace.

7.1
Read: Luke 15:11-32
Practice: *Lectio Divina*
Closing: "Falling" Trish Watts (based on the words of Julian of Norwich)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CY2Zgqpz4AQ

7.2 [EF 1, 9, 10]
Re-read: Luke 15:11-32
Reflect: *Consider the various relationships in the parable. In what ways are they broken and repaired – or not. Which character in the story do you most identify with at this time? Are there any characters or voices missing from this story? If so, who might they be and what would they say if given voice?*
Closing: "The Mother's Side of the Conversation" by Maren Tirabassi (handout)

7.3
Read: Matthew 25:14-30
Practice: *Lectio divina*
Reflect: *Use your imagination to see what the first two servants do with the money entrusted to each of them. (Think of a talent as equivalent to one million dollars today.) Imagine a conversation with each of them. How did they invest those talents in different ways? After you talk with them, ask them to point out what "talents" you have been given by God/Spirit. You might list them in your journal. Make a note of how you have (or have not) used those gifts.*
Closing: "Simple Gifts" – Muriel Anderson
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iItnz1_vcxk

7.4 [EF 1, 3, 9]
Re-read: Matthew 25:14-30

Reflect: *Use your imagination to probe the mind of the third servant. Ask the servant about the choice to simply hide the master's money instead of doing what the other two servants did. Ask how that servant responded when hearing what the other two servants were doing. Ask what feelings the third servant had all the while: fear, anger, annoyance, relief, or some other emotions. Then use your imagination to ask the Master what evoked such a strong reaction to the third servant. Consider the relationships in this parable. In what ways are they broken or maintained? What if the language for the relationships in this story were changed from master and servant/slave to employer and employee or parent and child? Does that change your experience of the story?*
Closing: 5 minutes of silence

7.5
Read: "Choice" by Lynn Ungar
https://www.lynnungar.com/poems/choice/
Practice: *Lectio Divina* and art journaling.
Closing: "It's Ok" – nightbirde
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6UzrJrkpwQ

7.6
Repeat any day this week. Remember that for Ignatius repetition means continuing the work you did and going deeper, not simply doing the exercise over again.

7.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you.

The mother's side of the conversation ...
(Luke 15) by Maren Tirabassi

Go to the door,
no, go into the road --
you know you want to.
He's there, just where the dust
is stirring such a storm.
He's there -- it's not a trick
of your eyes from so long looking
west into the setting sun.

Remember how he would
run to you and
hang in hugs around your neck.
Go out -- he's dying in the road
for love,
and all the wrong turnings
in his life are tight --
he knows the truth.

Of course, he's ready for your anger.
I bet he's rehearsed
remorse
with every step.
Surprise him -- take the sandals.

No, I don't think you look old.
I love the gray --
it looks like feathers
here and here ... distinguished.
This time don't let him run
through your fingers --
here, don't forget the ring!

I'm going to the kitchen.

Trust me, his brother will get over it.

https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com

First Week
Week 08 – My Own History of Sin and Grace

"*More than an intellectual treatise, this is an experience,*
a gut feeling that invades my entire being.
In my body, my thought, and my prayer I live in the reality I call
'the transcendence and immanence of evil.'
The thing that destroys is there, omnipresent,
taking different concrete form in the midst of the most varied situations."
- Ivone Gebara

Before we can deepen our relationship with God, it is important that we bring our authentic selves to this work and to allow God to love us in precisely those places we feel are unlovable. In this week, we begin to directly explore our own experiences of the tearing of relationships and our participation in that rupture, which is how we are defining "sin." The focus here is on our direct and individual action or inaction in the personal relationships in our lives. In the coming weeks we will explore our participation in systemic, social or collective sin. Remember that we enter this difficult territory wrapped in the quilt of the Holy One's love and grace.

This week also introduces some key practices of Ignatian spirituality: 1) The Colloquy or sacred conversation, and 2) Ignatian Contemplation, the use of spiritual imagination to pray with a story from scripture.

Intention: to have a deepening awareness of and sorrow for my own failure to be in relationship and to have a heartfelt experience of God's love for me.

8.1 [EF 1, 2, 7, 8, 9]
Read: "A Meditation on Our Own Sins" (handout) and do the practice described. The Closing is included in that.

8.2 [EF 1, 12]
Read: "The Colloquy" (handout)
Practice: Repeat the practice in "A Meditation on Our Own Sins." Does anything different come to you this time? What do you notice as you reflect on this?
Closing: Colloquy with a sacred partner about what you have learned through this meditation.

8.3 [EF 12]
Read: Ignatian Contemplation (handout)
Read: Luke 7:36-50
Practice: Use *lectio divina* to identify the words or images that move you and meditate on them. Then pray with this scripture story using Ignatian Contemplation. Place yourself in the scene and notice what comes up for you. Have a conversation, or colloquy, with Jesus and/or other people or beings present at the scene of the story.
Closing: As described in the handout, return to your breath and a prayer of gratitude.

8.4
Reread: Luke 7:36-50
Practice: *Visio Divina* with "Anointing of Jesus" by Jan Johnston
https://www.janjohnstonartworks.com/products/anointing-of-jesus
Closing: "You Will Be Found"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFZmT-LRMBM

8.5
Practice: Vivek Murthy – A Meditation for Moments of Despair and to Feel Less Alone (On Being) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIwnVhuVtbU
Closing: 5 minutes of silent meditation

8.6
Repeat any day this week.

8.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week.

Selected Sources:
Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, 2002.
Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed, 2nd ed.*, 2022.

A MEDITATION ON OUR INDIVIDUAL SINS

This is one of Ignatius' suggested meditations (SE 55-61). It is a contemplative survey of each period of our lives, bringing to mind our personal history of sin. Remember that sin is about relationships, not simply rules. The goal is not to evoke guilt or shame, though such feelings may arise. Rather, the intent of this meditation is to see ourselves clearly, with all our gifts and limitations and without blinders or filters, so that we can meet God in our authentic selves.

Look back over your life and divide it into 4-6 time periods in whatever way makes the most sense to you. Reflect back on each time period one at a time.

First, Ignatius suggests it may be helpful to consider: 1) where you lived at the time (for example, the city/town, the neighborhood, the house); 2) the relationships you had with others at that time (for example, family, friends, neighbors, co-workers); 3) what you were doing during that time (for example, at home, school, work).

Second, allow to rise to the surface of your memory 3-4 instances where you identify your conduct as sinful. It could be something you did, or something you failed to do. Include any times you were told what you were doing was sinful or shameful if they come to you. For any instances you remember in that time period, don't dwell on that memory or write the story down at this time; just identify or name that story, listing them in your journal. You might also make note of how you feel in your body as you recall those stories.

Once you have considered each time period in your life, reflect back on your lists. What do you notice?

Because of the way the concept of sin has been used by the dominant culture and patriarchy as a weapon, particularly against women, LGBTQIA people, and people of color, we need to critique our lists carefully for evidence that we have internalized those judgments. "At times, gifts waiting to be developed will be understood as sinful: for example, justified and liberating anger, assertiveness, leadership, or independence." (Liebert and Paulin Campbell, 143-44).

Allow yourself to feel sorrow for those situations where what you did, or failed to do, caused or worsened tears in the fabric of relationship.

Third, open yourself up to feel Love holding you in this time and place. One way to do that is to bring to your mind and heart how the whole earth, indeed the cosmos, works together to support your life – the air, water, warmth of the sun, coolness of evening, food from the earth. Then use a memory, music, image or practice from the Preparation Weeks that helps you feel God's loving presence. This will be your Closing.

THE COLLOQUY

Beginning in the First Week or phase of the *Exercises*, Ignatius invites us to a form of prayer called a "colloquy" as part of an exercise. A colloquy is an intimate and meaningful conversation traditionally with God as Father, Mother, or Creator; with Jesus; with Mary, the mother of Jesus, or sometimes all three in what is called the "Triple Colloquy." However, one of the key insights of the *Spiritual Exercises* is that through spiritual imagination we can have very real conversations not only with aspects of the Holy One, but with sacred Others. This traditionally meant saints, other holy people, or our ancestors. However, understanding the divine nature of all of creation, the more-than-human world can also be approached through colloquy.

Let the conversation develop naturally, as one would speak to a dear friend, family member, or lover. Remember that a conversation involves not just speaking but listening; so be sure to allow some silence in which the other party may speak.

In the beginning, these conversations may feel awkward or contrived. If you are having a lot of difficulty imagining these conversations, you may want to use an image (such as an icon, or a painting or other image depicting the scriptural story) as a visual aide. You can talk directly to the image. Often it helps to ask your conversation partner direct questions and then listen for what comes back to you.

As you progress through the *Exercises*, you will find them flowing more naturally. Ignatius intended that every exercise end with a colloquy; that is, by making direct, intimate contact with the Divine. Indeed, one could view the individual exercises as different ways to prime the pump for these conversations. As you become more comfortable with the colloquy, you can move into it at any point in an exercise.

Strong relationships require open and honest communication. Ultimately, the whole of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* can be seen as an extended conversation with the Divine.

Selected Sources
Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell. *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed,* 2nd ed., 2022.
Kevin O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 2011.

IGNATIAN CONTEMPLATION

"*There is no one model or criterion for determining what is authentic knowing*."
- Ivone Gebara

In Ignatian Spirituality, "contemplation" has a very specific meaning different than in other spiritual traditions. For Ignatius, "contemplation" was a way of praying using our imagination. Both Ignatius and ecofeminist theologians recognize that there are ways of knowing beyond logical, rational thought and beyond even our physical senses. In the *Spiritual Exercises,* Ignatius used this very active form of prayer to bring scripture to life and to connect us directly with the Divine, our ancestors, and sacred others. Ignatius didn't invent this way of praying, but he popularized it and used it to great effect in the *Exercises*, trusting what it reveals.

Ignatius recommends introducing contemplation in the Second Week. However, because of the ecofeminist emphasis on alternative ways of knowing, we will begin using this form of prayer in the First Week. Ignatian contemplation as a technique can be used with any scripture text or story, though Ignatius primarily recommends it with stories involving the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as told in the gospels.

With Ignatian Contemplation, we are invited to enter the story, becoming a part of it. Although we begin with the story as told in scripture, we are not constrained by it. Done in the context of prayer, we can let Spirit speak to us through the story in the way that is most meaningful to us right now. If you are concerned that your imagination has taken you "too far," pay attention to what you are feeling. Have you been led towards God or father away from God? Are you feeling consolation or desolation? Most importantly, trust that the insights you gain in this way are true.

Another aspect of Ignatian Contemplation is called the "Application of the Senses." As we enter the story, we imaginatively use our senses to explore the scene and the story. For example, how do we imagine that location smelled? What sounds did we hear? Was the floor of the house rough or smooth, warm or cool to the touch? Ignatius often recommends this technique when repeating the contemplation of a particular scripture, as a way to go deeper, but it can be used at any time to allow deeper immersion into the story.

- Before you begin, focus on your breath to quiet your heart and mind. Open yourself to the presence of Spirit. As you focus on your breath, hold the intention to use this time to draw closer to the Source of all things.
- Read the scripture passage slowly two or three times. You don't need to memorize it but read it enough so that you feel you could tell it to someone else, even if not word for word. You may want to read it aloud once to let the story sink more deeply into your body. Then you may want to set the text aside; trust that you will remember what you need to remember about the story.
- Start by imagining the environment where the story takes place. Imagine it in as much detail as you can.
- Once you immerse yourself in the scene, let the story play out in your imagination. There are several ways you can do this.
    - You can take on the role of one of the people mentioned in the scripture.

    - You can take on the role of another human or other being that you imagine as part of the story. For example, perhaps you imagine a character not named in the story: a friend, a bystander, a tree, an animal present in the scene.
    - You can be simply a witness as the story unfolds as though watching a movie or listening to a radio play.
- Remember that the words or actions do not have to exactly match what is written in the scriptural version of this story. Stay with the story until it feels complete for you.
- Then spend some time in conversation, or colloquy, with Jesus and/or one or more of the other participants or observers to the scene. You can ask them questions if you like about the events in the story and the reasons for their words or actions.
- You can take notes while you are engaged in this imaginative prayer, or let it play out then write about it in your journal, whichever is most helpful to keep you engaged in the story.
- Reflect back over your experience of the story. What did you notice? What stood out for you? When did you feel closest to God during this experience?
- Close by returning to your breathing and offer a prayer of gratitude for this experience.

Selected Sources

Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*, 1999.
Kevin O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 2011.
Tucker Redding, "Jesuit 101: Ignatian Contemplation, Encountering God Through Our Imagination," *The Jesuit Post*, October 4, 2021. https://thejesuitpost.org/2021/10/jesuit-101-ignatian-contemplation-encountering-god-through-our-imagination/

First Week
Week 09 – Our Sin and the World

"*One of the problems of urban, industrial lifestyles is that often our racial social justice struggles have been compounded by our disconnection from the land. . . .*
"Environmental abuse, racism, sexism, and classism
are interlocking forms of oppression and evil."
- Karen Baker-Fletcher

This week's exercises continue our exploration of our personal experience of sin by looking at our individual intersection with the broader issues in our world such as racism and environmental degradation. Note that on 9.4 the exercise requires some advance preparation.

Remember that repetition in the *Spiritual Exercises* means going deeper than the first time you did an exercise, not starting over again. One way to do that is to change up or add something to the exercise. For example, change location – if you did the exercise the first time inside, do the exercise again outside, or while taking a walk. Ignatius also suggests that in the First Week you can change the environment of where you are doing the exercise by turning down the lights or otherwise making it darker, which complements the mood of the First Week. You can also change your posture, for example by kneeling instead of sitting, or lying on the ground outside, or standing barefoot in the grass. Another option might be to change how you process the exercise, for example by art journaling instead of writing.

Intention: to have a deepening awareness and sorrow for my own failure to be in relationship with our human neighbors and the more-than-human world and a heartfelt experience of God's love for me.

9.1 [EF 9]
Read: Galatians 5:16-17 (The Message): "My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness."
Practice: *Lectio divina*
Closing: "Letting Go" – Steffany Gretzinger
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KheXC2g1gkI

9.2 [EF 1, 9. 10]
Watch: "Are You a Racist? 'No' isn't a Good Enough Answer"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jm5DWa2bpbs
Reflect on how it feels in your body to watch that video.
Practice: Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, or sacred other on this question: Where does my own self-interest intersect with racism or other forms of oppression?
Closing: "Race and Healing: A Body Practice" (handout)

9.3 [EF 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11]
Read: World Wildlife Fund website regarding the threats to the environment on planet Earth.

https://www.worldwildlife.org/threats
Reflect: Which one(s) most strongly catch your attention?
Practice: Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, or sacred other on this question: Where does my own self-interest intersect with environmental degradation?
Closing: Repeat Body Practice (handout)

9.4 [EF 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11]
Read: Privilege Beads (handout) and do the practice described there.
Closing: "May I Be Empty" Batya Levine
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9c-rgm2zfU

9.5
Re-read the Privilege Beads exercises and consider your answers. What do you notice? Are there any connections between the areas in which you notice privilege and your spiritual freedom?
Practice: Do another walk praying with your beads/beans.
Listen: "On Another Panel About Climate" – Ayisha Siddiqa
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Erugvq_1RCo

9.6
Repeat any day this week.

9.7
Savor the graces of the week
- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week.

Selected Sources

Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit,* 1998.
Heather Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 1st edition, 2005.
Melanie L. Harris, *Ecowomanism,* 2017.
Sallie McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, 1993.

“Race and Healing: A Body Practice” (adapted from Resmaa Menakem)
https://onbeing.org/blog/race-and-healing-body-practice/

Therapist and trauma specialist Resmaa Menakem is working with old wisdom and very new science about our bodies and nervous systems, and all we condense into the word “race.” “Your body — all of our bodies — are where changing the status quo must begin.”

Find a quiet place and experience this short, simple body practice offered in Resmaa’s conversation with Krista Tippett in the On Being episode, ‘Notice the Rage; Notice the Silence.’

Find a quiet place.

Just sit for a moment, looking straight ahead.

Think back over what you have heard, seen or read today.

Notice what is actually landed in your body and what is actually still in the air.

All you are doing is noticing what’s happening.

Notice how much you dislike or like some of what was said.

Just notice those pieces.

Now look over your left shoulder, and use your neck and your hips; so turn and look over your shoulder.

And then come back to center.

Now look over your right shoulder, using your neck and your hips.

The reason why you use your neck and hips is to engage the psoas muscle and some parts of the vagal nerve.

And now, come back to center and just be quiet.

What’s different? What do you notice?

Privilege Prayer Beads

"*If you don't have to think about it, it's a privilege*."
- Relando Thompkins-Jones

This exercise is a way of getting a visual and physical sense of our individual intersection with environmental and social justice issues in our lives by visualizing the ways in which we impact or are impacted by those issues in our lives. There are two suggestions for completing this exercise, or you may adapt it in a way that is meaningful and practical for you.

Option 1 (preferred): At a craft store purchase wood or glass beads and jewelry-making string or something similar. You will need 8 different colors/types of beads that will fit on that twine, 8 of each bead. Depending on the size of the beads this could become a bracelet, a necklace, or a string of prayer beads.

Option 2: Use dried beans in a small bowl, preferably a glass bowl so you can see through it, but a wooden or ceramic bowl will work too. It would be most effective if you use 8 different varieties of beans (8 of each) but as long as you have 64 beans it can work. Small stones could be another possibility.

On the following pages are 8 categories with 8 questions under each. Assign a bead/bean to each category. If you answer "Basically, yes" to a question in a category add a bead/bean to your string/bowl. Don't overthink it. These represents areas of privilege in your life in comparison to other beings, human and more-than-human, in this world. The flip side of a privilege is that there are typically others who are suffering oppression in those areas.

When you finish the questions, tie off your string if you are using that. Go for a contemplative walk holding your string of beads or your bowl full of beans. Feel it's weight. Reflect and pray with the beads/bean, remembering what each stands for (if using a bowl with beans, you can take them one out at a time into another bowl as you pray).

Make your string or bowl part of your altar.

Category A

1. I can assume that I will easily have physical access to any building.

2. I have never been taunted, teased, or socially ostracized due to my physical ability or age.

3. I do not have to worry if there will be room enough in an airplane, car, or theater seat.

4. I don't have to worry about whether the snow has been cleared off the pathways.

5. I can hear what's going on around me without using an assistive device.

6. I can easily see the letters on the page.

7. I am reasonably certain that others do not think that my intelligence is lacking just because of my physical status or age.

8. I don't have to think about my daily pain level when planning activities or events.

Category B

1. No one questions if it is appropriate for me to get married or have children because of my sexual orientation.

2. I can move about in public without fear of being harassed or physically attacked because of my sexual orientation.

3. I do not have to fear that if my family or friends find out about my sexual orientation there will be economic, emotional, physical, or psychological consequences.

4. If I want to, I can easily find a religious community that will not exclude me on the basis of my sexuality.

5. No one questions the "normality" of my sexuality or believes it can be "cured."

6. People don't ask why I "chose" my sexual orientation.

7. I can go for months without me or anyone else referring explicitly to my sexuality.

8. People of my sexual orientation are well represented in positions of power.

Category C

1. I can turn on the television and see people of my race widely represented.

2. Schools in my community teach about my race and heritage and present it in positive ways throughout the year.

3. I can go shopping alone and most of the time I will not be followed or harassed.

4. I can take a job without people thinking I got my job only because of my race.

5. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.

6. I am never asked to speak for all the people in my racial group.

7. I can find bandages or make up that more or less match my skin color.

8. I can easily buy toys, children's books, and greeting cards featuring people of my race.

Category D

1. I drink water, soda or other beverage in a plastic bottle at least once a week.

2. I would cut down a tree to build an extension on my home.

3. My home is heated with fossil fuels (vs solar or other renewable source)

4. I drive a gasoline-powered car

5. I travel on an airplane more than once a year.

6. I have killed a spider in my home.

7. I eat red meat more than once a week.

8. My wants and needs are currently given priority by the dominant culture of planet Earth.

Category E

1. If I have or had children and a career, no one asks me how I balance family and work.

2. My elected representatives are mostly people of my gender.

3. I am able to use a public bathroom for my gender.

4. I do not have to think about what my wardrobe says about my gender or sexual availability.

5. No one assumes I am a sexual predator because of my gender.

6. People do not have difficulty using my preferred pronouns.

7. I do not worry about walking alone at night.

8. I can complain without being told I'm being too emotional or asked if it is "that time of the month."

Category F

1. My workplace or school are closed on my major religious holidays.

2. I do not need to learn the religious customs of others and I am not penalized for not knowing them.

3. My religious views are reflected by a majority or even a significant minority of elected officials or candidates for public office.

4. Food that honors my religious practice can easily be found in the grocery store.

5. There are numerous places to worship for my religion in my community.

6. Most people do not consider or treat my religious practices as "weird."

7. I can talk openly about my religious practices without concern about how it will be received by others.

8. My religion will not put me at risk when I travel.

Category G

1. I am reasonably sure that my family will not have to skip meals because we cannot afford food.

2. I can afford to refill my prescription medication.

3. I do not live near a toxic waste site or major industrial center.

4. I have travelled internationally.

5. I am reasonably sure my tap water is safe to drink.

6. I have never been homeless or evicted from my place of living.

7. “Vintage” or “thrifted” clothing is an option, not a necessity for me.

8. I can afford and do not have to rely on public transportation unless I choose to.

Category H

1. When I apply for work, my right to legally work in this country is not questioned.

2. People generally assume that I speak English.

3. I have never been told not to speak in my native language during everyday interactions.

4. My right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is recognized by the dominant culture of the area of the planet where I live.

5. If I wanted to, I could travel freely to almost any country.

6. I never had to worry about having an interpreter.

7. People where I live rarely ask me what country I’m from.

8. I have never been told to “go back” to where I came from.

First Week
Week 10– Social Sin and Metanoia

"*Given the importance of breath*
in so much ecofeminist and ecospiritual practice and theology,
Eric Garner's 'I can't breathe' . . .
is even more poignant and heartbreaking,
especially when considered in the context
of the fact that he had asthma, an environmental illness."
– Melanie L. Harris

"*The enemy—indifferent, selfish, shortsighted, xenophobic, anthropocentric, greedy human beings—calls, at the very least, for a renewed emphasis on sin as the cause of much of the planet's woes and an emphasis on a broad and profound repentance*."
- Sallie McFague

This week's exercises lead us to explore our participation in social sin – the sinful systems, structures and institutions of our society. Often, we are unconscious of them, or they seem natural and normal because we are so steeped in them. We move from there to look at what repentance looks like for us.

Intention - to uncover what has been unknown and an openness to God's love for me and for the world.

10.1 [EF 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 11]
Read: Social Sin (handout)
Practice: *Lectio Divina* with James 12:15-17 (quoted in the handout). Consider using art journaling, such as *Praying in* Color, or doing a contemplative walk as you pray with this scripture.
Closing: Breath prayer of your choice.

10.2 [EF 1, 2, 9, 12]
Read: Luke 11:42-51
Practice: Use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, Mary or sacred other on how the Pharisees and the lawyers are so habituated to the social situation in which they live and in which they participate that they cannot see it as personal or social sin.

10.3
Repetition of Contemplation of Luke 11:42-51.
Closing: "The Place Where We are Right" by Yehuda Amichai
https://www.centralsynagogue.org/assets/downloads/Mishkan_11-30-19.pdf

10.4 [EF 1, 3]
Read: Metanoia (handout)

Read: John 8:1-11
Practice: *Lectio divina*, then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Reflect: *This story is usually told as a story of the woman's sin, and God's grace as shown by Jesus. How is this also a story of social sin? Colloquy with Jesus, Mary or sacred Other about this story and what it raises for you.*
Closing: "Turn Me Earth" – Peter Mayer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIeRKNzwANA

10.5 [EF 1, 3]
Practice: Turning yourself around (handout)
Music: "Grace" by Jimmy Be Free
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sN_NBmeiTs

10.6
Repeat any day this week.

10.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week.

Selected Sources

Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*, 1998.
Heather Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 1st edition, 2005.
Melanie Harris, *Ecowomanism*, 2017.
Sallie McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, 1993.

SOCIAL SIN

"*Ecofeminism stresses relationship,*
not solely because it has been women's domain,
but because it is a more viable ethical framework than autonomy
for transforming structures that are environmentally destructive."
- Carol J. Adams

"*We are here to disrupt the stories we feel stuck within."*
- Heidi Barr

In our Western culture of the individual, we tend to view sin only in individual terms: It is our personal "bad" behaviors or choices. If sin is mine alone, then I alone bear responsibility for correcting it and the same is true of others. This ignores, or at best minimizes, our interconnectedness. It also contributes to our collective indifference to the struggles of others.

Social sin is collective sin – that is, the failure or rupture of relationship that manifests in the structures, institutions, and systems of the wider society. It lives in a people, in a community, and in groups. As Catholic theologian Gregory Baum wrote, "Personal sin is freely chosen; social sin is a collective blindness. There is sin as deed and sin as illness." (quoted in *Salt and Light*)

There are (at least) two aspects of this collective blindness. The first is blindness to the structures that cause and perpetuate widespread social ills such as racism, poverty, violence, pollution, and destruction of habitat. We are blind because we have been raised to see these situations as "normal." We don't recognize that what is "normal" in our worldview is not normative for all. For example, a white person who has always been treated fairly by the police may not recognize that her experience of law enforcement is different from that of a black person. A man may not understand the frustration of women who cannot achieve pay equity despite equal training and hard work. Someone who has never had to worry about having enough money to put food on the table may not understand why it is hard for someone making minimum wage to take time off to register to vote. And a human may see a highway as convenience, whereas a deer experiences it as a deadly barrier that must be crossed to find food.

We are all stuck in the stories of our own social location and tend to look at the world only through the lens of our own experience and self-interest. For our eyes to be opened, we need to step outside our familiar and comfortable routines and worldview and see things from a different perspective. A willingness to be open to the stories and experience of others is the key to healing these relationships.

Social anthropologist Melba Padilla Maggay defines sin as social, or even cosmic, "disharmony." Instead of individual choices that only affect ourselves, Padilla Maggay sees sin as involving our relationships to the whole community.

"Sin is breaking our trust and responsibilities to our immediate community
as well as the community of all creation.
An understanding of sin as social disharmony

is much more in line with the Old Testament focus
on the breaking of relationship and covenant.
God's anger is directed at those who have oppressed
the foreigner, fatherless, and widow (Ezek 22).
The neglect of the Sabbath
is a sin because it perpetuates an economic system
that harms the whole."
- Cindy Lee

If sin is social or collective, then then it is our collective responsibility to do what is needed for healing and restoration. Even if my individual, personal behavior has not directly led to the rupture of relationships, I am still responsible for responding to the suffering and oppression those systems have created or perpetuated.

However, we are sometimes blind not only to how relationships between humans, and between humans and the more-than-human world, are negatively affected, but we also can be blind to the relationships themselves. The denial of our interconnection and interrelationship is itself sinful. Often this is a willful blindness: At some level we know that if we acknowledge our relationship, that will come with a responsibility – a cost we are not willing to pay.

"*We compete with nature more than we sometimes like to admit.*
It is one thing to walk in nature as Emerson describes so gloriously,
enjoying its bountiful gift of divine aesthetics.
It is quite another when nature invades and threatens to destroy your home
as termites, carpenter bees, and carpenter ants do.
Yet, questioning our human-centered tendencies,
we must realize that we live on shared land."
- Karen Baker-Fletcher

What does it really mean that we "live on shared land?" What does it mean that the land we live on was taken from cottonwood trees, and foxes, and indigenous peoples? How is our comfort and way of life based on the sweat and blood of people and other beings on the other side of the world? What structures, institutions and systems benefit from our continued blindness? How does our blindness contribute to a culture of domination?

"Jesus spent much of his public ministry
stirring up awareness of some of the most hurtful social evils of his day,
like religious hypocrisy among the priests and Pharisees,
corrupt systems of justice perpetuated by the lawyers and scribes,
unfair treatment of the poor by the rich, biased treatment of women . . . etc."
- Louis M. Savary

But raised awareness is not the ultimate goal. Always the Gospel points us to Love. Awareness must lead towards individual and collective action.

" *If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food*
and one of you says to them,
'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,'
and yet you do not supply their bodily needs,
what is the good of that?
So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."
- James 2:15-17

In these *Spiritual Exercises*, we will return to the question of what action to take, what is our work to do in the weeks ahead. First, we must see, and let God hold us in our seeing.

Selected Sources:

Carol J. Adams, "Introduction," *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, 1993.
Heidi Barr, *Collisions of Earth and Sky: Connecting with Nature for Nourishment, Reflection, and Transformation*, 2023.
Cindy Lee, *Our Unforming: De-Westernizing Spiritual Formation*, 2022.
Salt and Light, "Social Sin," https://www.wearesaltandlight.org/learn-together/understanding-social-sin
Louis M. Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises: In the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*, 2010.
Melba Padilla Magay, *The Gospel in Culture: Contexualization Issue Through Asian Eyes.* Manilla: OMF Literature, 2013,

METANOIA

The Greek word translated in the Bible as "repent" or "repentance" is *metanoia*, which has a slightly different meaning. "Repentance" as it is commonly understood, focuses on the past—on what you did wrong, on your "sin," on what you need to change. By contrast, *metanoia* means putting on a new mind set; it focuses on the future, on how you will think and act going forward.

The word *metanoia* appears 58 times in the New Testament. Scholars have traced the choice to translate it as "repentance" to the time when the Greek New Testament was first translated into Latin for early Christians. There was no equivalent word in Latin to the full meaning of *metanoia*.

Rather than simply sorrow for your past action or inaction, *metanoia* in Greek implies a continual action, not something that happens just once. It's something that happens again and again in our lives: changing our minds, changing our hearts, changing our direction. Returning our focus again and again to God.

Metanoia is similar to the Jewish idea of *teshuvah*, which in Hebrew literally means physically turning our body towards God. According to Jewish mysticism, *teshuvah* comes not only from within an individual, but is also a force surrounding us that we tap into when we repent. As Professor Yehudah Mirsky describes it, "You catch the wave." In some Jewish mystical texts, *teshuva* is a way of healing or repairing a spiritual tear in the very fabric of the universe. In other texts it is described as a kind of rebirth, or as the achievement of the soul's deepest freedom.

Selected Sources

Susan Mahan, "Metanoia — Transformation and Change," *Blog.Theologika.net: Reflections on Religious Experience*, March 16, 2015
http://blog.theologika.net/category/spiritual-growth/metanoia/
"Teshuvah in Judaism: A Guide to Repentence," in *The Jewish Experience* blog from Brandeis University. September 13, 2021. https://www.brandeis.edu/jewish-experience/holidays-religious-traditions/2021/september/atonement-yom-kippur-mirsky.html#:~:text=Teshuvah%20is%20the%20central%20theme,strayed%20or%20looked%20away%20from.

TURNING YOURSELF AROUND

Choose one of the following options:

Option A: Walk a labyrinth. At every turn in the path stop, say "thank you," and very deliberately make the turn to go in the opposite direction. After you exit the labyrinth, pause for 5 minutes of silent meditation to notice what you are feeling and what arises for you. That is your closing.

Option B: Use this exercise adapted from the InterPlay form "Walk, Stop, Run."

1. Read these instructions through before you start
2. Put on the music using the link provided and turn up the volume so you can hear it as you walk around your room
3. Walk in any direction until you bump into something that blocks your path. Then stop, say "thank you" to whatever you bumped into. Slowly and deliberately turn around and walk in a different direction.
4. After this happens, instead of turning around when you bump into an obstacle, walk backwards still facing the obstacle until you bump into something. Again, say "thank you," then turn and walk in another direction.
5. After a few times, walk un an unusual path, or walk in an unusual way. You can walk fast or very slow, or space permitting you can run.
6. Stop periodically as you walk to notice what is around you, then turn and walk in a different direction.
7. Mix up these various options.
8. When the music stops pause for a few minutes and notice what you are feeling and what arises for you. This is your closing.

First Week
Week 11 –Repentance and Grace

"*Healing does not come from our own effort but from letting go and letting God love us through all things.*"
- Matthew Linn, SJ

"*In ecotheology a creation-centered tradition is favored over a fall/redemption, wherein all life is understood as coming into fullness rather than in need of redemption."*
- Heather Eaton

This selection of exercises concludes the First Week, or phase, of the *Spiritual Exercises*. So here you are invited to reflect back not only at the end of each prayer period, and at the end of this week (lower case "w"), but over the whole of this phase/Week (capital "w") – which means 06-11. The practice of repeatedly reflecting back allows new insights and connections to surface.

Intention: to have a deepening awareness and sorrow for my own failure to be in relationship and a heartfelt experience of God's love for me.

11.1 [EF 1, 3, 6, 7]
Read: Mary, Undoer of Knots (handout)
Practice: As described in the handout including *Visio Divina* with two images of Mary, Undoer of Knots (1. Cindy Cole, 2. Mattie Karr)
Closing: "Undo Me" by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSDTieKgHW8

11.2 [EF 1, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12]
Read: The Foot of the Cross (handout)
Practice: As described in the handout
Closing: "I See You" by Redemption Music
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ihi3ManYuY

11.3 [EF 1, 3, 11]
Read: Romans 8:38-39
Practice: *Lectio divina*.
Closing: Breath Prayer from Cole Arthur Riley (INHALE) I forgive myself; (EXHALE) Shame has no voice here

11.4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8]
Read: A Meditation on Grace (handout)
Practice and Closing: As described in the handout.

11.5
Repeat any day this week.

11.6
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.
- Repeat any exercises where you feel called to go deeper.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

11.7
Prayerfully review your journal for the First Week. What stands out for you? What do you notice? Where did you feel that you were moving towards God/Spirit? Where did you feel you were moving away? How do you feel about proceeding into the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises?*
Closing: "Patient Trust" by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/prayer-of-theilhard-de-chardin/

Selected Sources:
Heather Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, 1st edition, 2005.
Matthew Linn, *Handout from Linn Healing Retreat*.

MARY, UNDOER OF KNOTS

In her book, *Birthing the Holy: Wisdom from Mary to Nurture Creativity and Renewal*, Christine Valters Paintner surveys the various titles of Mary, the mother of Jesus. One of those titles is "Undoer or Knots" or "Untier of Knots." St. Irenaeus suggested in the 2nd Century CE that Mary untied the knots of sin created by Eve. Then in the 18th Century, a Bavarian painter created a painting with this title in which Mary, standing between heaven and earth, patiently unties knots in a long white ribbon assisted by two angels. One angel presents Mary with the knots of our earthly lives and the others presents the untied ribbon back to us.

We have explored how sin is the failure or rupture of relationships, and how that rupture is often caused by disordered attachments. Through colloquy and spiritual imagination or through simple prayer, "we can ask for Mary's support in loosening and undoing the knots in the thread of our lives that bind us to unhealthy patterns, habits, and ways of being." (Paintner, 31) Then using this unknotted thread, we can ask for Mary's help in stitching together the wounds caused by sin, to bring healing. We do not have to do this work alone.

Practice: *Visio Divina.*

1. Read these instructions through before beginning this practice.
2. Consider the two contemporary artistic renderings of Mary as Untier of Knots from the handouts and gaze upon each in prayerful meditation. Choose the one that speaks to you more. Consider what it is about that image that led you to choose it.
3. As you gaze on the image you chose, reflect on the knots – the places of constriction or unfreedom – you are experiencing in your life now. Some of these you may have identified in earlier First Week exercises. Perhaps there are knots of conflict in your relationships with family, friends or co-workers. Perhaps you recognize knots of unhealthy habits or patterns that impact your relationship with the earth and all the beings that share this earth.
4. Soften your gaze so you no longer are focused on the image. Pay attention to your body. Do you feel any knots there—places of pain, tightness or tension? If so, focus on them in a gentle, listening way. What may those places of tension be saying to you? Breathe into those tight or wounded places. Invite Mary into those places and imagine fingers gently massaging to loosen them and bring comfort and healing.
5. Remain in relaxed silent meditation until you feel ready to bring yourself gently back to awareness of your surroundings. Then listen to the closing song.

Adapted from:
Christine Valters Paintner, *Birthing the Holy: Wisdom from Mary to Nurture Creativity and Renewal*, 2022.

Figure 3. *Mary Undoer of Knots* by Carol Cole. *Source:* CarolColeArt on etsy.com

Figure 4. *Our Lady Undoer of* Knots by Mattie Karr. *Soutce:* MattieKarrStudio on etsy.com

AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

In the First Week, Ignatius suggests meditating on a series of questions while imaging ourselves in a very specific location and posture: At the foot of the cross looking at Jesus crucified there. As we gaze upon Jesus, we are invited to imagine him gazing back at us with love.

I invite you to reflect on the questions below, either 1) gazing at Jesus as described above, or 2) sitting at the foot of a tree, gazing up at its spreading branches. Both are embodiments of Divine Love.

For the second option, as you gaze at the tree, open yourself to feel the earth beneath you. Know that the roots of the tree in front of you spread out underneath the earth forming a complex web that holds the soil together and holds you in this moment. Feel the welcome of the earth and the tree. Breathe in the gift of oxygen the tree provides to you in love.

Reflect on the following questions:

1. *What have I done for Love?* Think of what you have done in the past to make a positive difference in the world. How have you used your talents, skills, knowledge, insight, attention, and presence in the service of kindness, compassion, or justice?
2. *What am I doing for Love?* Consider what you are currently doing to improve the world around you. How are you nurturing or strengthening your relationships with others and with the earth? This could also include what you are doing now to develop your bodymindspirit to be better able to work towards healing and wholeness.
3. *What could I do for Love?* Consider what things you hope to do to nurture and strengthen relationships in the world around you and in the wider earth community. You do not need a definite list at this time, just what comes to you or what things you have thought of doing in the future.
4. *What have I not done for Love?* Reflect on the times in the past where you had an opportunity to make a positive difference in the world, but you didn't take it.
5. *What am I not doing now for Love?* Consider what things you could be doing now to improve the world around you, to nurture or strengthen the relationships, or to develop your bodymindspirit, but you are not.
6. *What could I do for Love that I currently have no plans to do?* Are there things you are aware of that you could do in the future to work for greater healing and wholeness in the world, but have taken no steps or made no plans to try? What might be holding you back?

Adapted from:
Louis M. Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises: In the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*, 2010.

A MEDITATION ON GRACE

This meditation is similar to the Meditation on Our Sins from Week 08. It is a contemplative survey of each period of our lives, bringing to mind our personal experiences of grace. In this context, grace could mean forgiveness, acceptance, or unconditional love from an individual; a sense of being forgiven, accepted or unconditionally loved by God; or a sense of being forgiven, accepted, or unconditionally loved by the earth or the more-than-human world. Some things that come to mind from different times in my life include the reaction of my mother when I broke a treasured figurine, the way my cat looks at me, and the first time I looked into my granddaughter's eyes.

Look back over your life and divide it into 4-6 time periods in whatever way makes the most sense to you. You may wish to use the same time periods as in Week 08. Reflect back on each time period one at a time.

Again, it may be helpful to consider: 1) where you lived at the time (for example, the city/town, the neighborhood, the house); 2) the relationships you had with others at that time (for example, family, friends, neighbors, co-workers); 3) what you were doing during that time (for example, at home, school, work).

Second, allow to rise to the surface of your memory a few instances where you experienced grace. These may be connected to significant events in your life, or just brief moments of connection. For any instances you remember in that time period, don't dwell on that memory or write the story down at this time; just identify or name that story, listing them in your journal. You might also make note of how you feel in your body as you recall those stories.

Once you have considered each time period in your life, reflect back on your lists. What do you notice?

Third, open yourself up to feel Love holding you in this time and place. One way to do that is to bring to your mind and heart how the whole earth, indeed the cosmos, works together to support your life – the air, water, warmth of the sun, coolness of evening, food from the earth. Then use a memory, music, image, or practice from the Preparation Weeks that helps you feel God's loving presence now. This will be your Closing.

Second Week
Week 12 – Incarnation

"*Holy, holy, holy is our God;*
The whole earth is full of God's glory."
- Isaiah 6:3

"*I have come to see God's embodiment in Jesus as significant*
not only because God is embodied in a human
but because God is embodied in a creature,
and by extension, in all creation."
- Karen Baker-Fletcher

"*A God who is ubiquitous cannot be absent from any molecule,*
membrane or mucus of the creation."
- Catherine Keller

The Second Week begins with meditations on the meaning of incarnation – the divine embodied in all creation.

It is important to keep up your daily Examen; that experience will form the foundation for Ignatian discernment practices later in the Second Week.

Intention: To open myself to wonder and awe and the mystery of incarnation.

12.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 12]
Read: The Second Week (handout)
Practice: Change out your altar to reflect your intention for the Second Week or phase of the *Exercises*.
Closing: Contemplate your altar as a focus for 5 minutes of silent meditation.

12.2 [EF 1, 2, 4, 6]
Read: "Contemplation on the Incarnation" Part One (handout)
Practice: Part One from the handout
Closing: "Breathing In" (handout) placing about a minute of silence between each stanza

12.3 [EF 1, 2, 4, 6, 7]
Read: "Contemplation of the Incarnation" Part Two (handout)
Practice: Part Two from the handout
Closing: "We Are Star Dust" – Symphony of Science
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8g4d-rnhuSg

12.4 [EF 1, 2, 4, 6]
Read: "Contemplation of the Incarnation" Part Three (handout)
Practice: Part Three from the handout

Closing: “Incarnation Song” – Chris and Thomas
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2xAD7hIS5w

12.5 [EF 1, 2, 6]
Read: Anzaldúa excerpt (handout)
Practice: *Lectio Divina.* You may wish to incorporate art journaling or *Praying in Color* techniques.
Closing: “The Whole Earth Is Full of the Glory of God” – Circle of Hope (you may want to sing along and/or dance)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoHSaGZIWG0
(lyrics are in the YouTube notes)

12.6
Repeat any day this week.
Remember that Ignatian repetition means continuing the work you did and going deeper, not simply doing the exercise over again.

12.7
Savor the graces of the week
- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources

Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming*, 2002.
Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*, 1998.

THE SECOND WEEK

"*How to speak of [Jesus]*
not just with methodological coherence,
but out of my own relationship life experience."
- Ivone Gebara

"*Of the most central and powerful relational models*
for expressing the God/world relationship,
'friend' is the richest and most suggestive."
- Sallie McFague

The Second Week is the longest phase of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The primary texts for these exercises are the Gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Through deep contemplation of those stories, we develop deeper intimacy with Jesus, and through Jesus with the divine One. The intention for the Second Week is sometimes referred to as the "*Godspell* grace" – a reference to the musical with its central song expressing longing to see, to love, and to follow Jesus more "day by day."

This experience is also often characterized by deepening "friendship" with Jesus. Friendship as a model for a relationship with the divine has deep resonance in ecofeminist thought. The more traditional "imperial" model of king, master, or Lord puts a priority on our obedience, depriving humans and other beings of agency. The "parental" model of Father, Abba, or even Mother, while more beneficent, keeps us forever as children. The latter is not necessarily inappropriate; even at age 50 I was still my mother's child. But in a healthy parental relationship there comes a time when parent and child start to relate to each other as adults. While taking the incarnation seriously, the "friendship" model allows us to grow up in our relationship with the Divine. Sallie McFague writes that friendship underscores "the adult nature of the relationship between God and human beings needed in our time." (McFague, 2021)

In the Second Week, Ignatius also presents his approach to discernment: making choices using spiritual guidance. Discernment applies to major life decisions, but it is also a way of being in the world attuned to the leadings of Spirit. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, our discernment culminates in a better understanding of God's call in our lives at this point in time.

Selected Sources
Ivone Gebara, *Longing For Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*, 1999.
Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, 2021.

CONTEMPLATION ON THE INCARNATION

Before moving into the story of Jesus' life, the incarnation or embodiment of the Divine in a particular human being on a particular planet, Ignatius invites us to use our imagination to get a "God's eye" view and consider the big picture (SE 101-109). It is best if you read the whole part before beginning each exercise.

Part One

1. Begin by looking down on the Earth from the perspective of space. Imagine it as a "pale blue dot," to quote Carl Sagan, hanging in the immense darkness of space.
2. Now allow your focus to zoom in on the surface of the planet. See how the whole surface is covered with living beings. Some of them move about on two legs, some on four, or eight. Some use wings to fly, some slither or swim. Some don't move across the land at all but move in other ways, spreading branches, leaves, flowers, up towards the sun.
3. Notice the rich variety of this life. The different colors, shapes, sizes. Listen to the different sounds they make; some laughing, some crying, some howling, some purring, some rustling with the breeze. See how some are old, and some are young. Some are being born, emerging into the sunlight, and some are dying, returning to the earth.
4. From your imaginary vantage point, consider how the beings on this planet treat each other: some loving, some hurting or killing, some ignoring others, some helping where needed. What do you see? What do you hear?
5. As you imagine all of this, what do you feel? How do you imagine Divine Love feels seeing and hearing what you do now?
6. Imagine the Divine voice saying, "Let us respond to the groaning of all creation."

Part Two

Now we broaden our gaze out more to look at the whole of the known universe.

1. Gaze at the Deep Field image from the James Webb Telescope. You may be able to use your browser to magnify it.

https://www.nasa.gov/image-article/nasas-webb-delivers-deepest-infrared-image-of-universe-yet/

2. Take your time. Look at the details, then shift your focus to look at the whole image. What do you notice?
3. According to NASA's website: "Webb's image is approximately the size of a grain of sand held at arm's length, a tiny sliver of the vast universe. The combined mass of this galaxy cluster acts as a gravitational lens, magnifying more distant galaxies, including some seen when the universe was less than a billion years old."
4. How do you feel as you gaze upon this image? How does this image land in your body?

Part Three

From the broadest possible scale, we move to a very small scale. This exercise uses both direct observation and spiritual imagination.

1. Go and sit outside, in your backyard or other place where you can experience even a little of the natural world. If possible, take off your shoes so you can feel the ground. Bring your journal and writing or art supplies with you.
2. Draw an imaginary 3-foot circle around yourself. For ten minutes, or however long feels right to you, pay close attention to everything within the circle. Notice the details. What do you see? What do you touch? What do you smell? How do you feel connected to what is immediately around you? Are there any other creatures or beings inside that circle with you? If so, imagine a conversation with them. Journal or draw what you see or what comes to you in the circle.
3. Use your imagination to look beneath the ground in that circle. What do you see? What roots, what small living creatures like nematodes, bacteria, fungi? How are they all working together? If you need help imagining this, you could look at this diagram and description of the Soil Food Web: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soil_food_web
4. Now shift your gaze outwards and up, looking all around you. Take in as much as you can of the whole context of where you are. What do you notice? How do you feel connected to the world around you? What creatures or beings share this larger space with you? Imagine a conversation with one of them. Journal or draw your response.
5. If possible, lie prone upon the ground on your back or front. Feel the earth beneath you. Let it hold you.
6. Now think of all of these as parts of the body of God. How does that feel?
7. Journal or draw about this experience.

Excerpt from Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*

You stand on tierra sagrada—nature is alive and conscious; the world is ensouled. You lift your head to the sky, to the wingspread of pelicans, the stark green of trees, the wind sighing through their branches. You discern faces in the rocks and allow them to see you. You become reacquainted with a reality called spirit, a presence, force, power, and energy within and without. Spirit infuses all that exists—organic and inorganic—transcending the categories and concepts that govern your perception of material reality. Spirit speaks through your mouth, listens through your ears, sees through your eyes, touches with your hands. At times the sacred takes you unaware; the desire to change prompts it and then discipline allows it to happen. With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings—somos todos un paíz. Love swells in your chest and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone / everything—the aboriginal in Australia, the crow in the forest, the vast Pacific Ocean. You share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label.

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*, 2015.

Second Week
Week 13 – Annunciation

"*The power of nature—and of women—to give and withhold life*
epitomizes the inescapable connection between the two
and thus the necessary relationship of justice and ecological issues."
- Sallie McFague

"Annunciation" means the announcement of something. It is typically used for biblical stories where a miraculous birth or event is foretold by an angel. "The Annunciation," capital "A," is the announcement to Mary that she will give birth to Jesus. However, there are other annunciations in scripture. In this week, we connect with three of our female ancestors through the stories of how they learned they would give birth.

Intention: to be open to how the Divine works in us and through us in unexpected ways.

13.1 [EF 3, 6]
Read: Genesis 18:1-15
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story
Closing: Colloquy with Sarah

13.2 [EF 3, 6]
Read: Luke 1:6-25
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story
Closing: Colloquy with Elizabeth

13.3 [EF 3, 6]
Read: Luke 1:26-38
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story. Ignatius said to "see in particular the house and rooms of Mary, in the city of Nazareth in the province of Galilee" (SE 103).
Closing: Colloquy with Mary

13.4
Re-read: Luke 1:26-38
Practice: Repeat your Ignatian Contemplation of this text. Choose a different perspective to enter the story perhaps a friend of Mary's visiting who observes the event, a bird in a tree, or the tree itself. Continue your colloquy with Mary or colloquy with a sacred Other. You may want to use art materials to art journal or create something that responds to this experience.
Closing: "May It Be" – Enya
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nt3Ggo1CE3g

13.5 [EF 1, 3, 6]
Read: "The Virgin" by Jan Richardson (handout)
Practice: *Lectio Divina*

Closing: *Visio Divina* with “Black Madonna with Dove of Peace” by Sue Ellen Parkinson
https://www.sueellenparkinson.com/black-madonna-with-dove-of-peace

13.6
Repeat any day this week.

13.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources:
Sallie McFague, “An Earthly Theological Agenda,” in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, 1993.

“The Virgin (to Mary)” – Jan Richardson

She told me that “virgin” really means “a woman unto herself, a whole woman, a soul mother.”
What a shift from thinking that a virgin is what you are
Until you are made complete by a man.
They still argue, Mary, about whether you were a virgin.
Maybe it’s never bothered me
Because something deep inside me knew the truth:
That you were whole, that you were a woman unto yourself,
That you chose freely, that you were a soul mother, a spirit catcher, a God bearer even before you consented to open your womb.
And so they can dicker over the question until the second coming,
But what I really want to know is,
Do we want to be whole?
Do we want to be healed?
Because that’s what Advent is asking us:
Are we ready to be born?

In the center of ourselves
You placed the power of choosing.
Forgive us the times
We have given that power away,
When we have sold
Our birthright
For that which
Does not
Satisfy
Our souls.
And so
In your wisdom
May our yes
Be truly yes
And our no
Be truly no,
That we may
Touch with dignity
And love with integrity
And know the freedom
Of our own choosing
All our days.

Jan Richardson, *Night Visions: searching the shadows of Advent and Christ,* 1998

Second Week
Week 14 – Visitation

"*The shared capacity to sing points to the many deep genetic connections that link humans to other living beings. In a beautiful article Rhodora Beaton eloquently states,*
'The image of singing as we go invites a broader vision of the journey song,
one that includes the duets of gibbons, the beat-keeping dances of parrots, and the elaborate and distinctive calls of whales and other aquatic mammals.'
Humans do not sing alone but raise their voices with a world of singers sharing the journey of life together."
- Elizabeth A. Johnson

"I have often wondered if Mary,
even with full knowledge and proclamation of the glory of her womb,
felt shame for it.
As her body changed and belly grew,
did she question if it was worthy to hold the divine?"
- Cole Arthur Riley

This week we continue to deepen our relationship with our ancestors in faith, Elizabeth and Mary, by exploring the story of Mary's visit to her older cousin, Elizabeth. Verses 46-55 are recognized as being a song and are traditionally attributed to Mary as "Mary's Song" or Mary's "*Magnificat*" after the beginning of this song in Latin. However, modern scholarship has uncovered that some ancient texts name Elizabeth as the singer instead of Mary. You may want to ask them about that in colloquy.

Be sure to continue with your daily Examen practice.

Intention: to be open to how the Divine works in us and through us in unexpected ways.

14.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6]
Read: Luke 1:39-45
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story
Closing: Colloquy with Mary and/or Elizabeth

14.2 [EF 4]
Read: "The Other Miraculous Pregnancy" Lara Freidenfelds
https://sojo.net/articles/other-miraculous-pregnancy-advent
Practice: Repeat Contemplation of Luke 1:39-45. Be sure to use all your senses. You may wish to pick a different perspective to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Elizabeth, Mary or sacred Other

14.3 [EF 1, 10, 11]
Read: Luke 1:46-56
Practice: use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy with Mary and/or Elizabeth.
Closing: "Visitation Song" Aly Aleigha
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BU3cuBJn3UM

14.4 [EF 1, 6, 10, 11]
Read: Luke 1:46-56 multiple times while playing this music (which is a combination of birdsong and human created music)
"Dawn Chorus" – Cosmo Sheldrake
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7arsbCR*NP8*
Practice: Rewrite the *Magnificat* in your own words and read it aloud to yourself. Consider writing it so the words could be sung to a familiar tune and sing the words instead. How does it feel to say or speak those words?
Closing: *Visio Divina* with "*Magnificat*" by Ben Wildflower (click on image to enlarge)
https://benwildflower.com/products/magnificat-print

14.5 [EF 4]
Watch: "Pregnancy 101"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEfnq4Q4bfk
Practice: As you watch the video, reflect on the fact that this is what was happening in the body of Mary as her son, Jesus, grows within her.
Closing: "Embryology" by Darlene Moore Berg
https://darlenemb.wordpress.com/2010/12/20/embryology/

14.6
Repeat any day this week.

14.7
Savor the graces of the week
- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources:
Lara Freidenfelds, "The Other Miraculous Pregnancy of Advent," *Sojourners* blog, Dec. 12, 2019.
Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Creation and the Cross*, 2018.
Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh*, 2022.

Second Week
Week 15 – Nativity

"*To be someone's mother is to die again and again*
Die to who you thought you were and who you hoped you would become.
Die to your cherished notions
of what a child of yours should look like, sound like, behave like.
Die to your illusions of control."
- Mirabai Starr

"To be grown, fed, delivered—God put faith in a body.
In Mary's muscles and hormones, bowels and breasts.
And when Christ's body is broken and blood shed,
we should hold in mystery that first a woman's body was broken, her blood shed,
in order to deliver the hope of the world into the world."
- Cole Arthur Riley

"*How and where we birth changes the story of birth and the story of place."*
- Patrisia Gonzales

Intention: to be open to how the Divine works in us and through us in unexpected ways.

15:1
Read: Luke 1:57-66
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story
Closing: Colloquy with Elizabeth, Zechariah or sacred Other

15.2
Read: Luke 2:1-7
Practice: *Lectio Divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: *Visio Divina* of "The Nativity" (1891) by Gary Melchers (click on image to enlarge)
https://www.etsy.com/listing/751634762/the-nativity-by-gari-melchers-print?gpla=1&gao=1&&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=shopping_us_ps-d-art_and_collectibles-prints-digital_prints&utm_custom1=_k_CjwKCAjw7oeqBhBwEiwALyHLM4jv6tbL6Xd0yKiovY3jO5BSxXmNSGKXov5v8qD7VZGOnwk-E4qrkBoCm8AQAvD_BwE_k_&utm_content=go_12565309126_119905712055_507283752437_aud-1408996296215:pla-328046931108_c__751634762_5089120946&utm_custom2=12565309126&gclid=CjwKCAjw7oeqBhBwEiwALyHLM4jv6tbL6Xd0yKiovY3jO5BSxXmNSGKXov5v8qD7VZGOnwk-E4qrkBoCm8AQAvD_BwE

15.3
Read: "The Liminal Space Before Giving Birth" by Courtney Martin
https://onbeing.org/blog/the-liminal-space-before-giving-birth/

Practice: Repeat Ignatian Contemplation on Luke 2:1-7.
Closing: "Witness a Humpback Whale Birth"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQPAgFH96mQ

15.4
Read: Another Nativity Story
https://www.thedodo.com/daily-dodo/people-spot-dog-in-nativity-scene-manger-then-realize-shes-not-alone?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=dodo&fbclid=IwAR1hGRmR5hzB16uDOpIF4AvX-6cmayQtLUh4DyJCsc-v-eKHs7gOPXjh4gE
Practice: *Lectio Divina*
Closing: Breath prayer of your choice

15:5
Read: Luke 2:8-20
Practice: use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: "Wise Women Also Came" – image and poem by Jan Richardson
https://www.wisecronecottage.com/2020/06/wise-women-also-came-by-jan-l-richardson.html

15.6
Repeat any day this week.

15.7
Savor the graces of the week
- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources:
Patrisia Gonzales, *Red Medicine: Traditional Indigenous Rites of Healing and Birthing*, 2012.
Courtney E. Martin, "The Liminal Space Before Giving Birth," *OnBeing* blog, July 22, 2016.
Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh*, 2022.
Mirabai Starr, *Wild Mercy: Living the Fierce and Tender Wisdom of the Women Mystics*, 2019.

Second Week
Week 16 – Infancy

"*Individuality and interrelatedness are features of the universe; hence, no one voice or single species is the only one that counts*."
- Sallie McFague

"*Past, present and future are not disconnected from each other."*
- Karen Baker-Fletcher

This week includes the stories we have of Jesus as an infant. There are echoes here of the *Magnificat* sung when Mary visited Elizabeth, as well as what that song addressed—life under oppressive patriarchal systems. The birth of this one child is not an isolated event—it has broader implications. Since we are all connected, the birth of each child is an event with impacts that ripple out through family, community, and beyond.

Intention: to know Jesus more intimately, to love Jesus more deeply, and to follow Jesus more closely.

16:1 [EF 1, 3, 12]
Read: Luke 2:21-39
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story
Closing: Colloquy with Mary, Anna, the infant Jesus or sacred Other

16.2
Re-read: Luke 2:21-39
Practice: Repeat Ignatian Contemplation on this story with a colloquy. You may wish to enter the story from a different perspective.
Closing: "Let Your Servant Now Go in Peace" – Taize
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNLdOhiW-8k

16.3 [EF 1, 2, 3, 12]
Read: Matthew 2:1-12
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story
Closing: Colloquy with Mary, Joseph, the infant Jesus, or sacred Other

16.4 [EF 1, 2, 12]
Read: Matthew 2:13-23
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story
Closing: *Visio Divina* looking at both "Rest on the Flight into Egypt" by Luc-Oliver Merson
https://useum.org/artwork/Rest-on-the-Flight-into-Egypt-Luc-Olivier-Merson
and
"La Sagrada Familia" by Kelly Latimore
https://kellylatimoreicons.com/products/la-sagrada-familia

16.5 [EF 1, 12]
Read: “First Word” by Irene Zimmerman (handout)
Practice: *Lectio Divina* – you may want to use art journaling or other creative media in response. You also might reflect on what you think Jesus was like as an infant or toddler.
Closing: “Little Baby” – MaMuse
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieW1N2kh7w0

16.6
Repeat any day this week.

16.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with “Day by Day” – Godspell
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWAqW5D5kZo

Selected Sources:
Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*, 1998.
Sallie McFague, “An Earthly Theological Agenda,” in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, 1993.
Irene Zimmerman, *Incarnation: New and Selected Poems for Spiritual Reflection*, 2004.

“FIRST WORD” by Irene Zimmerman

Mary stirred a measure of flour
into the leaven and listened to Jesus
giggle and coo through the sounds of languages
living and dead. She laughed as she added
a second cup to the bubbling batter—
for all she knew, her son could be babbling
in Greek. She added
a third measure, worked it
into the glutinous mass, and added
a fourth. As she scraped the sides of the bowl,
she remembered the scrape of the olive tree
against her father’s house while she listened,
inside, to words more foreign than any
her son was speaking now.

She was up to her wrists in the sticky dough
when Jesus arrived at the initial sounds
of their native tongue. She flew from kitchen
to carpenter shop, floured her husband’s
hand midway between awl and hammer,
and ran back with him. Their cradled son, his fingers and toes
curling around the olive wood rattle
that Joseph had lately carved for him,
was distinctly repeating the Aleph and Beth
of his native tongue to the leavening dough
and spellbound table and chairs:
“Abba, Abba, Abba.”

Irene Zimmerman, *Incarnation: New and Selected Poems for Spiritual Reflection*, 2004.

Second Week
Week 17 – Growing Up

"I always wonder about the unexposed roots,
which only the tree knows about,
that only the tree can feel."
- Karen Baker-Fletcher

"*Without imagination, transformation would not be possible.*
Without creativity, 'other' epistemologies-
those of the body, dreams, intuitions, and senses other than the five physical senses-
would not reach consciousness."
- Gloria E. Anzaldúa

This portion of the *Spiritual Exercises* is often called "The Hidden Life of Jesus." Scripture gives us few stories or clues about Jesus' early years and Ignatius specifically invites us to imagine this period of Jesus' life growing up as the son of a carpenter (SE 135, 271). We know people we grew up with, or who we knew as they were growing up, in a different way than we know those we meet only as adults. It doesn't matter whether the details of these early years are historically accurate, trust the Spirit to show you what you need to know.

As we engage in imaginative contemplation and prayer on the life of Jesus, details from your own life that correspond to these times Jesus' life may rise to the surface. So, in addition to coming to know Jesus more intimately, we may also gain insight into our own lives. Some of these memories may be painful, of course, so please be gentle with yourself in this process.

The colloquy is especially important this week. In addition to speaking with Jesus, Mary, and/or Joseph about Jesus' early years, you can talk with them about any memories or experiences from your own life that arise in these contemplations. This is also a particularly good week to engage creatively using art materials, poetry, or other media.

Intention: to know Jesus more intimately, to love Jesus more deeply, and to follow Jesus more closely.

17:1 [EF 1, 12]
Read: Luke 2:40
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use your spiritual imagination to spend time with Jesus during his boyhood until the age of twelve. What do you imagine it was like? Be sure to colloquy with Jesus, Mary, Joseph or sacred Other. What stories can they tell you about this time?
Closing: "Beautiful Boy" – Celine Dion (John Lennon cover)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CNdUzVBE2o

17.2 [EF 1, 12]
Read: Luke 2:41-50
Practice: *Lectio Divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.

Closing: “Jesus Among the teachers” by Vasily Polenov (click on image to enlarge)
https://paucaverba.blogspot.com/2021/03/christ-among-teachers-vasily-polenov.html

17.3 [EF 1, 12]
Read: Luke 2:51-52
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use your spiritual imagination to spend time with Jesus during his teenage years and young adulthood. What do you imagine it was like? Remember that at some point during Jesus’ youth Joseph, his father, died. Be sure to colloquy with Jesus, Mary, Joseph, or sacred Other. What stories can they tell you about this time?
Closing: Breath prayer of your choice.

17.4
Repeat one of the first 3 days of this week.

17:5 [EF 1, 12]
Read: Matthew 3:13
Practice: First *Lectio Divina,* then use your spiritual imagination to spend time with Jesus as he prepares to leave home and makes his way to the Jordan River to see his cousin, John. Colloquy with Jesus about this time. Ask him questions: What led him to do this? What were his thoughts as he made that journey?
Closing: “Be Thou My Vision” – Audrey Assad
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Optrm7lF16s

17.6
Repeat any day this week.

17.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week or “Day by Day” by The 5th Dimension
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACBcVaXO3Ko

Selected Sources:
Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*, 2015.
Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*, 1998.

Second Week
Week 18 – Call of the Kin-dom

"One of the amazing things about the Bible is that it seems so multilayered—
there seems always to be another layer of meaning.
Even when I think I 'understand' a biblical story,
even when I think I've gotten to 'the' kernel of insight the story holds—
it turns out there is something more there,
something I haven't seen yet."
- Lauren Winner

"*I believe that it is also important to claim wildness*
as a state of mind and a way of being.
Both dimensions of the word—
the wild as sacred lands and the wild as quality of consciousness—
must inform the other: wild hearts breed love and protection of a wild earth."
- Lyanda Lynn Haupt

This week marks the mid-point of these *Spiritual Exercises,* as well as the mid-point of the Second Week phase. The story of the Baptism of Jesus is told in all four Gospels in the Bible, which tells you how important this story has been in the Christian tradition. Mark places it at the very center of his Gospel, so it is fitting that it is in the very center of our *Spiritual Exercise*s. It is a threshold story, liminal space in Jesus' life after which nothing would ever be the same for him.

It is notable that elements of the more than human world played key roles at this pivotal time in Jesus' life. The Jordan River is an important character in this story, so are the wilderness and the wild creatures.

As you engage in contemplations this week, remember to carefully compose the scene: what did it look like, sound like, smell like? What did the water feel like? What was the weather? What time of day was it? Look around; who was present – human or other? What do you notice about them? After you have composed the scene, then place yourself in the story and let it play out.

The prayer intention for this week is to listen for the call of Jesus and the Kin-dom of God in your life. But all you need to do is listen. At this point, there is no need to come to any conclusions or to take specific action. Just listen with no expectations of what you will hear.

This is also a good week to consider using art journaling or another way to playfully engage this story.

Intention: to listen more carefully for the call of Jesus and the Kin-dom of God in my life.

18:1 [EF 6, 12]
Read: Mark 1:9-11
Practice: *Lectio Divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story. You may want to do the contemplation, or listen to the closing song, while in the bath or shower.
Closing: "River" – Ibeyi (If you did not use a bath or shower for this exercise, then use water here while listening to the closing song – you can use a basin of water and repeatedly pour it over your hands or other part of your body – or make connection with water as much as possible in any way that feels right for you.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T97OrLJQpfw

18.2 [EF 2, 3, 4, 6, 12]
Read: "Wild Baptism" (handout)
Consider: Have you ever had a visitation by a bird or other wild creature? If so, remember that story in as much detail as you can. You may want to record the story and play it back to yourself so you can hear it.
Practice: Repeat Ignatian Contemplation on Mark 1:9-11. You are encouraged to enter the story through an element of the more-than-human world and/or to colloquy with a sacred Other.
Closing: "Re-Wild My Soul" Heather Houston
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9c54Te57kYE

18:3 [EF 12]
Read: Mark 1:12-13
Practice: *Lectio Divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Breath Prayer by Cole Arthur Riley (INHALE) I am not who I was (EXHALE) I will honor my becoming

18.4 [EF 2, 3, 6, 12]
Read: "Call into the Wild" (handout)
Practice: Repeat Ignatian Contemplation of Mark 1:12-13. You are encouraged to enter the story through an element of the more-than-human world and/or to colloquy with a sacred Other.
Closing: "I am Wild" MaMuse
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCWE7CMtfyU

18.5 [EF 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7]
Read: The Kin-dom Meditation (handout)
Practice: The meditation in the handout.
Closing: Breath Prayer by Cole Arthur Riley (INHALE) I am free to expand (EXHALE) I return home to myself

18.6
Repeat any day this week.
Remember when repeating to start with what had energy for you and continue from there, don't just redo the exercise.

18.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources:
Lyanda Lynn Haupt, *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit*, 2021.
Cole Arthur Riley, *Black Liturgies: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations for Staying Human*, 2024.
Lauren Winner, "Forward," to *Consider the Birds: A Provocative Guide to Birds of the Bibl*e, by Debbie Blue, 2013.

WILD BAPTISM

"*We know there is a wilder earth,*
and upon it—within it—
a wilder, more authentic human self."
- Lyanda Lynn Haupt

"*Reclaiming wild is reclaiming who you are meant to be,*
who the world is meant to be, which isn't static.
Wild means swirling in dynamic and even loving relationship
because all wild things are naturally interconnected."
- Victoria Loorz

Modern biblical scholarship has introduced some interesting ideas about the story of Jesus' baptism from Mark to consider as you repeat your contemplation on it.

1. Most translations of Mark 1:10 say the Spirit descended on Jesus "like a dove." However, a dove is, in fact, just a pigeon by another name. "We tend to call the more delicate and smaller members of the family 'doves,' but the names are interchangeable."[1]
2. And this is likely not some metaphorical bird or the ghostly apparition of a bird, but an actual bird, gliding down to perch on Jesus. A more appropriate translation of the phrase should be "as a dove/pigeon," not "like a dove/pigeon."[2]
3. Pastor and theologian Debbie Blue also points out that it is also unlikely that this particular pigeon/dove was white. The color white carries the symbolism of virginal purity and innocence, so you can see why artists rendering this scene would choose to use it. However, it was more likely grey, with an iridescent green and purple neck; an ancestor to the common domestic pigeon.
4. Also, a bird was not the only part of the more-than-human world active in this story. The River Jordan is a major character. Mark used the Greek preposition "in" ("in a location") to describe where John was performing this ritual: He was baptizing people **in** the River Jordan. However, when it came time for Jesus to be baptized, Mark used a different preposition, "into" ("a penetration of or union with"). John baptized Jesus **into** the River Jordan.[3] During this ritual, Jesus merged with the river, became a part of it. So, first Jesus became part of these wild waters, then a wild bird descended onto him, and then the Holy Spirit drove him into the wilderness. This was a wild baptism.
5. This was not crystal-clear spring water; the River Jordan is muddy water indeed. What Jesus was baptized into was a slurry of water **and** earth. As he was immersed, Jesus literally united with the earth and emerged out of it.

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[1] Debbie Blue, *Consider the Birds: A Provocative Guide to Birds of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), Kindle Edition, Chap. 1.
[2] Mark I. Wallace, *When God Was a Bird: Christianity, Animism, and the Re-Enchantment of the World* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2019), Kindle edtion.
[3] Victoria Loorz, *Church of the Wild: How Nature Invites Us into the Sacred* (Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2021), Kindle edition, p. 58.

CALL INTO THE WILD

In Mark 1:12, the Spirit drives the newly baptized Jesus out into the wilderness for forty days. This is no accident; Jesus wasn't lost. I wonder what the wilderness, and the wild animals and angels he met there, had to teach him? What has being in nature taught you?

"*Wilderness offers us abundant nurturing. In the name of civilization,*
the Western world 'tames' what it calls 'wild.'
The forests need to be 'tamed' or 'domesticated' just as so-called savages,
who are really wise native people,
need to be tamed, according to this kind of thinking.
But what some call wild, we can see as free.
The 'wildness' of nature, of our own bodies and spirits,
is another way to talk about freedom.
In creation, in both nonhuman nature and human nature,
wildness is a synonym for creative freedom.
Creative freedom inheres in all creation and gives all creation great beauty."
- Karen Baker-Fletcher

"*New work in psychology reveals*
that simply the knowledge of a flourishing wild—
beyond the reach of most human visitors—
positively affects our psychology and creativity.
Wilderness that we will never even see roots us in a sense."
- Lyanda Lynn Haupt

"*We come to the desert to transform."*
- Mary Reynolds Thompson

Selected Sources
Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*, 1998.
Lyanda Lynn Haupt, *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit*, 2021.
Mary Reynolds Thompson, *Reclaiming the Wild Soul: How Earth's Landscapes Restore Us to Wholeness, 2nd ed.*, 2019.

The Kin-dom Meditation

"*Kindred, All.*
The earth and all that dwell herein—
the rooted, feathered, furred, scaled—
are relations, our dear kindred."
- Lyanda Lynn Haupt

"*We live with other creatures not as a community but as an origami,*
or a mesh network, or a rhizome set of roots and sprouts.
The models we should now follow are not hierarchical but horizontal,
not of a kingdom but of a democracy and even a biocracy,
including all creatures, especially sentient ones,
within the circle of our moral concern."
- Sallie McFague

In the original *Spiritual Exercises*, the first exercise Ignatius offered for the Second Week was "The Call of the King" (SE 91). It is a multi-part exercise, intended as a bridge between the exercises of the First and Second Week. Ignatius began with an imaginative meditation on a temporal, earthly king, then moved to a meditation on a divine, eternal king.

Ignatius knew how a charismatic, powerful leader could inspire people to great deeds of heroism on and off the battlefield. Kings, kingdoms, knights, battles, loyalty, and service to the crown were a natural part of his medieval milieu. He thought that if the someone could bring to mind, through memory or imagination, a powerful and benevolent King of an earthly kingdom, the attraction that would be felt towards that human King could be transferred to the even more powerful and benevolent heavenly King. "Just as a temporal king could capture one's heart, energy, and commitment, so the call of Christ the eternal King would elicit great desires to follow the way of discipleship and be transformed by entering a deeper and more intimate relationship."[4]

Today, however, the relationship we are being called into is not that of a subject to their king, human or divine. "The imperial models [of God]—lord, king, master, and so on—suggest our obedience, depriving us human beings of the responsibility that is rightfully ours, given that we are the only life-form able to decide to share the planet's resources."[5] Instead, the call is to the awareness and recognition of the already existing web of relationships in which we live and move and have our being. It is to the kin-dom of God, as we are all kin—from the Old English meaning "of the same kind." The relationship is horizontal, not hierarchical.

[4] Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 2nd ed., 155.
[5] Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology: Kenosis, Climate Change, and Befriending Nature*, 2021.

This is not really a new interpretation but is in fact very old. In the Middle Ages, English mystic Julian of Norwich referred to Jesus as "our kinde Lord."[6] However, "in Middle English the words "kind" and "kin" were the same — to say that Christ is 'our kinde Lord' is not to say that Christ is tender and gentle, although that may be implied, but to say that he is kin — our kind."[7]

The following exercise is similar to and repeats some of the elements of the Contemplation on the Incarnation from week 12, but as usual with repetition in the *Exercises,* the emphasis is slightly different. The Incarnation exercise invited an experience of awe, wonder, and Divine Love permeating all things. This Kin-dom Meditation invites an experience of interconnection with creation.

1. It is best to read these instructions completely over before you begin.

2. Settle into place, standing or sitting with feet on the ground in a relaxed posture. Environmental conditions permitting, you may wish to be outside on bare earth and to take your shoes off. If you are inside, try to sit by a window where you can see outside. If that is not possible, no worries, your imagination will work as well.

3. Read the words of the meditation slowly and mindfully to yourself and then carry them in your memory into the prayer experience, letting it unfold organically. Don't worry if you do not remember the instructions completely; trust that you will remember what you need to remember.

Close your eyes or let your gaze soften and eyelids relax.
Take a deep breath, let it out slow.
Do that again.
Open yourself up to Spirit, always with you, as you enter this prayer experience.
With the next breath pay attention to the way the air and its life-giving oxygen fills your lungs on the inhale,
And how you are releasing what is no longer needed back to the outside air with your exhale.
Do that again.
Know that what you exhale will be inhaled by plants to sustain their life and returned to the air as oxygen.
You are breathing with all the plants around you.
Continue breathing in a slow, relaxed way.
Be with that for a moment.

Now put the fingers of one hand gently on the pulse in your neck.
Focus on your heartbeat.
Imagine your body with all its blood vessels connecting each part of your body.
Some are arteries that collect oxygen in the lungs then carry oxygenated blood to every cell.
Some are veins, carrying your blood back to the lungs to release what is no longer needed by your body to be released,

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[6] Georgia Ronan Crampton, ed., *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich* (Kalamazoo, MI: The Medieval Institute, 1994), p. 66.
[7] Janet Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Introduction.

open and ready to receive new oxygen.
With every beat of your heart, this is happening.
Imagine you can feel that happening in your body with each heartbeat, each breath.
Be with that for a moment.

Now imagine those vessels extending down from your feet into the ground beneath you, connecting you also the earth.
With each heartbeat, with each breath, imagine that same cycle moving through you down into the earth and back,
So it is not just your cells that receive the life-giving oxygen but the earth,
And it is not just what you no longer need that is exhaled back into the air.
You flow through the earth, and the earth flows through you.
Be with that for a moment.

Now in your imagination, see yourself as a tree,
Those vessels connecting you to the ground are your roots.
Let your imagination flow through those roots as they grow and spread into the earth.
Notice your tap root, your central core root, burrowing down, down, down deep.
Imagine going so deep it connects with an aquifer, an underground source of water.
Let your imagination flow with that water and see in your mind's eye how those ground waters connect to other underground waters, and to the waters above.
Imagine it flowing it your nearest above ground fresh water like a stream, river, or lake, and from there eventually out into the ocean.
Be with that flow for a moment.

Now return your focus to your breath and follow it back down into your roots.
See the tips of your roots push slowly, gently through between the grains of soil, reaching out.
Feel yourself part of this weaving.
Notice the other creatures that share the soil with you: earthworms, nematodes, bacteria, fungi.
Imagine you can see those creatures at work, breaking down the nutrients in the soil,
Taking chemical elements into their bodies for life and releasing back what they do not need into the soil.
Notice that tiny hairlike roots are sprouting along your larger roots, connecting you to the fine threads of the fungal network woven throughout the soil.
Notice that your roots can now absorb the elements released by the other creatures in the soil with you and can use them for energy.
Feel your roots drawing up that energy up, up into your body so that your vessels can spread them all the way out to your limbs.
Be with that energy flow for a moment.

Return your focus to your breath again and follow it down into your roots, into the tiny hair roots, and out through the threads of the fungal network.
In your imagination, travel the threads of that weaving wherever it wants to take you.
Notice that you are now connected to the other plants near you.
Widen your attention so that you imagine the whole web of life around you: trees, shrubs, grass, other humans and all the other creatures sharing the land you are on.

You are part of all of this.
The plants, humans, animals, rocks, water are all your kin.
Listen with the ears of your heart; what might they be saying to you?
Be with that for a moment.

Holding on to your sense of being rooted in the earth,
Slowly pull back the focus in your imagination to see the piece of land you are on from a distance—how it is part of a neighborhood, a city, a country.
Pull your focus back until you see you and the land you are on is part of the whole planet, viewing it from space.
Pull your focus back until you can see the whole Earth from space.
See how the Earth is bathed in heat and light from the Sun.
Imagine you can see the Earth shedding some of its heat and a small amount of its atmosphere, slowly exhaling it into space.
Shift your focus so you are looking from the Earth out into space.
Look at the moon revolving above you.
Feel the ties of gravity that hold it in orbit, just as it holds you to the surface of the Earth.
Imagine you can see the solar wind emanating from the Sun out to all parts of the solar system.
Let yourself surf the solar wind away from Earth, past Mars, past Saturn, past Jupiter, past Neptune, past the asteroid belt that rings the solar system.
Send your imagination out past the solar system to the edges of the galaxy and beyond – remembering the Deep Field images you looked at before.
Notice how space isn't empty – it is full of material going back to the origin of the universe like background radiation, dark matter, and dark energy – material connecting the whole solar system, the whole galaxy, the whole universe.
You are part of all of this.
The planets, the stars, the comets, asteroids, the solar wind, they are all your kin.
Listen with the ears of your heart; what might they be saying to you?
Be with that for a moment.

Now let yourself slide back along that galactic web towards Earth.
Watch as the Earth gets bigger and bigger,
Slide in through Earth's atmosphere,
Feel it envelop you again in its warm embrace.
Float down to the surface,
And return your awareness to your body.
Take a deep breath, let it out slowly.
Feel the oxygen filling your lungs.
Taste the air on your tongue.
Gently bring yourself back to where you are sitting or standing and when you are ready, open your eyes.
Rest for a moment and notice how you are feeling.

Selected Sources

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Kevin J. Zahnle & David C Catling, “Our Planet’s Leaky Atmosphere,” *Scientific American* blog (May 1, 2009), https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-planets-lose-their-atmospheres/
Daisy Dobrijevic, “Solar Wind: What is it and how does it affect Earth?” Space.com (July 6, 2022): https://www.space.com/22215-solar-wind.html
Daisy Dobrijevic & Elizbeth Howell, “What is cosmic microwave background? Space.com (January 28, 2022), https://www.space.com/33892-cosmic-microwave-background.html
Lyanda Lynn Haupt. *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit*, 2021.
Sallie McFague. *A New Climate for Christology,* 2021.

Second Week
Week 19 – Kith and Kin

"*We continue our ancestors' dreams and prayers, often unaware that we are doing so*."
- Karen Baker-Fletcher

"'*Kithship' is intimacy with the landscape in which one dwells and is entangled*."
- Lyanda Lynn Haupt

"For many of us, the specific details of our origin are unknowable,
and we may never learn the names of the people who walked generations before us,
but we can still connect to our roots.
Our shared origin is a living earth that's part of the universe that holds everyone."
- Heidi Barr

"*Lineages are a lie.*
Each of us arises from entangled root systems.
My spiritual home was in the earth."
- Perdita Finn

In this second central week in the *Exercises*, we continue to explore the stories of Jesus at the start of his ministry. What obstacles or resistance did he face? What encouraged or supported him? Where is there resistance in us to responding to Spirit's call in our lives? Where do we find encouragement and support? Are there sources of wisdom and support we can draw on that we may not have considered?

Be sure to keep up your daily Examen practice.

Intention: to know Jesus more intimately, to love Jesus more deeply, and to follow Jesus more closely.

19:1 [EF 3, 5, 8, 9, 12]
Watch: "The Devil = Your Inner Critic" – Nadia Bolz-Weber
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQhscx6-d8I
Reflect: "Satan" in Hebrew means "The Accuser" or "The Adversary." Reread Mark 1:12-13. Other gospel accounts of this story detail how Jesus was tested/tempted, but Mark leaves it up to our imaginations. Repeat an Ignatian Contemplation of this story and imagine Satan/the Accuser testing Jesus in the wilderness. What was Jesus tested/tempted with? How did Jesus respond? Colloquy with Jesus about that experience. What did Jesus draw on for support?
- What does the voice of your own inner critic say to you? When do they tend to appear? How do you tend to respond? What voices of support are available to you when that accusing voice becomes loud?
Closing: Go back to your journal from the Preparation Weeks and chose a practice, place, or song that made you feel the presence or love of the Divine or use "You Have Always Been Enough" by Lynn O'Brien
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SCCB422ZUU

19.2 [EF 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11]
Read: "Kithship" (Handout)
Practice: Described in handout
Closing: Breath prayer of your choice

19:3 [EF 1, 2, 5, 6, 8]
Read: "Ancestors" (handout)
Practice: Described in handout
Closing: "We Are" – Sweet Honey in the Rock
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWaw-tQ4W7w

19.4 [EF 1, 3, 12]
Read: John 2:1-12
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, and/or sacred Other.

19.5
Re-read: John 2:1-12
Practice: Repeat Ignatian Contemplation on this story with a colloquy. You may wish to enter the story from a different perspective.
Closing: "Miracle" – Mali Music
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9i9bXFGqzM

19.6
Repeat any day this week.
Remember when repeating to start with what had energy for you and continue from there, don't just redo the exercise.

19.7
Savor the graces of the week
- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources:
Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit: Womanist Wordings of God and Creation*, 1998.
Heidi Barr, *Collisions of Earth and Sky: Connecting with Nature for Nourishment, Reflection, and Transformation,* 2023.
Perdita Finn, *Take Back the Magic: Conversations with the Unseen World*, 2023.
Lyanda Lynn Haupt, *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit*, 2021.

KITHSHIP

"In modern English—
even in England, where the expression originated—
'kith and kin' are mistakenly conflated into one meaning:
our relatives,
those who are close to us.
But the reason the archaic phrase was formed around two different words
is that they are in fact different. . . .
Where kin are relations of kind,
kith is relationship based on knowledge of place—
the close landscape . . .
where each tree and neighbor and robin and fox and stone is known,
not by map or guide but by heart.
Kith is intimacy with a place,
its landmarks, its fragrance, the habits of its wildlings.
Kithship enlivens kinship."
- Lyanda Lynn Haupt

"*The land holds stories I will never know,*
as well as many that I can learn if I'm willing to listen
and dig deeper than is comfortable."
– Heidi Barr

How do we develop kithship, an intimacy with the place on which we live? This is not something that happens in a day, or a week. Like any relationship, it develops over time, with attention and intention. As you develop kinship and kithship with your environment, it can be a source of support, and spiritual allies, for you when you are in need, and you will be moved to offer back your care and attention.

Here are some ways to begin to learn the stories the land holds and develop greater intimacy with it. Choose the one that speaks most to you today. You can return to this over and over.

- Learn as much as you can about the plants and animals, even the insects, that share the land with you. You might start a land journal of what you see and learn.
- Wander repeatedly on the land – in your yard, on the grounds around the building in which you live. If a particular plant or animal catches your attention stop and have a conversation with it using spiritual imagination, or just hang out and pay close attention to it.
- Learn what you can about the land itself – what is its history? For example, I know that the land where I live was once grassland but was overgrazed in the past and has become shrubland. Did where you live used to be farmland? What was that area like in prehistoric times?

Selected Sources

Heidi Barr, *Collisions of Earth and Sky,* 2023.
Haupt, Lyanda Lynn. *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit*, 2021.

ANCESTORS

"*I always wonder about the unexposed roots, which only the tree knows about, that only the tree can feel. There are family roots we know, there are family roots we choose not to know more about, and there are family roots we can never know because they are beyond reach, memory, and written or oral record*."
--Karen Baker-Fletcher

"*Mesoamerican and African Indigenous ancestral wisdoms teach us*
that the veil between the lands of the living and the lands of the dead is permeable,
that the veil can be lifted or penetrated so that the dead may visit to assist the living."
- Lara Medina

"*To become naturalized is to know that your ancestors lie in this ground*."
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

"*Our ancestors work through us; we are all walking family trees."*
- Aimee Medina Carr

"To recover our human experience is, in fact,
to place ourselves within the tradition of our ancestors,
of those whose bodies vibrated as ours do
when they experienced the attractions and repulsions we ourselves undergo
as we relate to so many different situations in our lives."
- Ivone Gebara

There are two genealogies of Jesus in the gospels. While Matthew puts his where one would expect, at the very beginning of his gospel (Matthew 1), Luke places his after Jesus' baptism and testing in the wilderness (Luke 3:23-38). While there is some overlap, for example both trace Jesus' line from Joseph (not Mary), they are really very different lists. Nor are either of them a true timeline.

Some scholars think that the reason Luke's list comes after the story of Jesus' baptism is that the first 2 chapters of Luke were later additions, and that Luke originally started his gospel in the same place as Mark, with John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus. But it fits there, where Jesus is born of water and Spirit (see John 3:5).

The important thing to realize is that genealogies in the Bible are more story than history, though they may include historical details. They are stories told to explain where someone comes from, what their lineage is, who their ancestors are, and how to understand their place in the passage of time. Biblical genealogies also reflect an understanding that our ancestors include more than our blood relatives.

Our ancestors include those on our own family trees, but they also can include the ancestors of our community, our ancestors of faith, and the ancestors of the land on which we live. Any or all of these are available to provide spiritual support for you when you are in need.

One of the insights of the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* is that through spiritual imagination we can speak with those who have gone before, as you have been encouraged to do in the contemplations and colloquies, and that that communication is real and trustworthy. You can ask them questions, seek their advice, or call on them for spiritual support. Further, through this connection, there can be healing across generations.

Who are your ancestors?

1) Read the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3:23-38. What else do you notice?

2) Write a genealogy for yourself in the way that feels right to you. How is it a story of you? You may have researched your ancestry, and you can use that as your starting place. But remember that you can include ancestors who are not your blood relations and that the timeline does not need to be factually accurate.

3) As you write your genealogy, consider who are your ancestors from whatever communities you belong to? This could include writers or other artists, historical figures, pioneers in your profession, saints or other religious figures you greatly admire and so have touched your life. Would you include Jesus in this list?

4) Also consider your ancestors on the land. What indigenous peoples inhabited the land on which you live? You may want to do some research on those peoples. There are tools on the internet to help identify and learn more about them.

5) Are there any objects or images you want to add to your altar to remind you of your connection to these ancestors, and as a way of invoking their support in this journey you are on through the *Spiritual Exercises*?

6) Read over the genealogy list you made for yourself a couple of times. Do any of the names stand out or shimmer for you? Sit with that name and any images that come to mind. If it feels right to you, you may wish to colloquy with that ancestor. Is there anything they have to communicate to you?

7) Journal about this experience.

Selected Sources
Aimee Medina Carr, *Rivers of Love*, 2019.
Bart Ehrman, "Luke's First Edition," Bart Ehrman's blog, (December 23, 2023), https://ehrmanblog.org/lukes-first-edition-for-members/
Ivone Gebara, *Longing For Running Water*, 1999.
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013.
Lara Medina and Martha A. Gonzales, *Voices from the Ancestors*, 2019.

Second Week
Week 20 – Responding to the Call

"*Dawn will never come if the heralds of dawn keep silence."*
- Anonymous 19th century woman

In this week, we follow Jesus as he begins his public ministry. We meet some of the people, including women, who gathered around him.

Be sure to keep up your daily Examen practice.

Intention: to know Jesus more intimately, to love Jesus more deeply, and to follow Jesus more closely.

20:1 [EF 1, 10, 12]
Read: Mark 1:14-20
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story, including a colloquy with Jesus or sacred Other
Closing: "The Summons" – John Bell
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xk2HlXZCJk

20:2 [EF 1, 6, 10, 12]
Read: Luke 8:1-3
Practice: *Lectio divina*. Reflect on the fact that these women "were ministering" (*diakonoun*) to Jesus and the others. You may want to have a conversation with one of more of them.
Closing: "We Shall Be Known" – MaMuse and Thrive Choir
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4xhQcgyoLk

20:3 [EF 1, 6, 10, 12]
Read: Luke 8:19-21
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, Mary and/or sacred Other.

20.4
Read: John 4:1-30. 39-42
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, the Woman, and/or sacred Other.

20.5 [EF 1, 3, 6, 10, 12]
Read: "A Well-Blessed Woman" – Jan Richardson
https://paintedprayerbook.com/2011/03/23/lent-3-a-well-blessed-woman/
Practice: Repeat Ignatian Contemplation on John 4:1-30, 39-42. You may wish to enter the story from a different perspective.
Closing: *Visio divina with* "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman" – Jacek Malczewski, Polish artist (1912) (click on image to enlarge)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lwowska_Galeria_Sztuki_-_Jacek_Malczewski_-_Christ_and_the_Samaritian_Woman.jpg

20.6
Repeat any day this week.
Remember when repeating to start with what had energy for you and continue from there, don't just redo the exercise.

20.7
Savor the graces of the week
- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week
or "Day by Day" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWAqW5D5kZo

Selected Sources:
Jean H. Henderson, "100 Years of IAWM" International Association of Women Ministers website, 2019. https://womenministers.org/our-history#:~:text="Dawn%20will%20never%20come%20if,heralds%20of%20dawn%20keep%20silence."&text=Twenty%2Dfive%20years%20ago%2C%20Beverly,assembly%20attendees%20with%20those%20words.
Jan Richardson, "Lent 3: A Well-Blessed Woman," *the Painted Prayerbook* blog (March 23, 2011), https://paintedprayerbook.com/2011/03/23/lent-3-a-well-blessed-woman/

Second Week
Week 21 – Two Standards

"It's all we have—that little rudder
that we employ in the midst
of all the eddies and rapids,
the current that pulls us
inexorably toward the sea.
The fact that you are swept along
by the river is no excuse.
Watch where you are going.
Lean in toward what you love.
When in doubt, tell the truth."
- Lynn Ungar, "Choice" (excerpt)

In this week, we begin a deeper look at Ignatius' approach to discernment by working with one of his iconic exercises, the Two Standards. Because this meditation builds on the experience of the daily Examen, it is particularly important to keep up that practice this week. You might also, for at least this week, do the Examen twice daily – for example, at midday and in the evening – reflecting on only half a day at a time. Use whatever form of the Examen speaks most to you.

Intention: to become more aware of the forces at work in my life.

21:1 [EF 3, 5, 8, 9]
Read: The Two Standards (handout) 1 and 2.
Practice: Meditate on page 2 and with whatever song, piece of music, story, or image comes to you.
Closing: Breath prayer of your choice.

21:2
Read: The Two Standards (handout) 3
Practice: Meditate on page 3 and with whatever song, piece of music, story, or image comes to you.
Closing: Breath prayer of your choice.

21:3
Read: The Two Standards (handout) 4
Practice: Reflect with the question on page 4 and do the triple colloquy.
Closing: Review whatever song, piece of music, story, or image came to you for page 3 of the handout.

21.4 [EF 3, 5, 12]
Read: Luke 18:18-25
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus and/or Sacred Other.

21.5 [EF 1, 3, 12]
Read: Matthew 11:28-30
Practice: *Lectio divina*. You may wish to use art journaling here.
Closing: "Come to Me (The Rest Song)" – Steven & Hannah Musso
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zb7hWNafr50

21.6
Repeat any day this week.
Remember when repeating to start with what had energy for you and continue from there, don't just redo the exercise.

21.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

1. THE TWO STANDARDS MEDITATION

"*God is always actively working to bring about God's kingdom, and we can be in tune, out of tune, or more or less in tune with God's intention*."
- William Barry

"*Discernment in the Two Standards acts like a tuning fork for discerning the realities of life, indicating resonance or dissonance with the God who dwells within."*
- Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

Ignatius considered the Two Standards to be a key meditation in the *Exercises*. A man of his time, Ignatius borrowed from his military past to construct this meditation. He described a battlefield, with two massive opposing armies. I Imagine something like a scene from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings,* with the armies of Mordor and the armies of the West facing each other across a huge expanse; only for Ignatius, one army rode under Christ's standard, or flag, the other rode under the flag of "the Enemy." Each is calling out for you to join them.

However, the goal of this meditation is not so much about choosing under which standard we will stand as it is about noticing and reflecting on those forces. It is about discerning what pulls or pushes us one way or the other. You could think of this as listening to whether we are "in tune" with the song of the Sacred, or if there is a siren song luring us away.

The Two Standards meditation addresses the reality that there are forces in ourselves, in our lives, and in our world that draw us towards God or draw us away from God. The struggle between these forces occurs not only within ourselves but within our families and communities, and even between nations. It can manifest as different value systems.

Unlike the *Lord of the Rings*, this is not some one-time, winner-take-all kind of situation. This is a daily discernment, as the threads of both songs are woven through everything. In the midst of the noise of everyday life, it is not always easy to discern the notes. The Two Standards meditation builds on the information gathered through the practice of a daily Examen. Through the Examen, moments of consolation or desolation are recalled; in the Two Standards we look for patterns in when we feel those moments, and for what may lie behind them.

I encourage you to play with the juxtaposition of opposites in the Two Standards. Sometimes we best understand something by exploring its opposite. Pay attention to how each feels in your body and what lingers.

Selected Sources
Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed, 2nd ed.*, 2022.
William A. Barry, *Letting God Come Close*, 2001.

2. **The Enemy's Song**

The Enemy's song can be subtle, maybe just slightly off-key. It is a song about material wealth, possessions, awards, and accolades. It speaks of pride in external things, judgment, and false modesty. The Enemy can also work through the opposite of pride – singing notes of helplessness, worthlessness, envy, or shame. This saps our energy and discourages us from action.

Material wealth and honors are not in themselves evil, but they can be temptations and distractions. They can weigh us down and imprison us. Focusing on them represents a value system that can disrupt or damage relationships. Acquisition of goods without recognition of the cost to the world in terms of labor, natural resources, and disposal severely impacts the earth on which we live and the other beings with whom we share this planet.

Can you think of a song or piece of music, a story, or an image that would represent this? How has this shown up in your own life?

3. **Christ's Song**

Christ's song is tender and gentle. It is a song about connection, freedom, and love. It encourages you to live into your authentic self and your full potential. It invites, rather than demands, and empowers us to creative action.

The words of this song include mercy, peace, redemption, and grace. It is a song of inclusion, not exclusion, recognizing the worth of all beings. It is also a song of humility, which literally means "from the earth" – a connection to the very ground we walk on, the ground of being, the nourishing soil of life. At the same time, hearing this song can give our hearts wings to soar.

Can you think of a song or piece of music, a story, or an image that would represent this? How has this shown up in your own life?

4. **Repetition and Triple Colloquy**

Review your journal for the Two Standards meditation.

Consider: What do I notice? How do I experience the Two Songs playing out in my life and in the world around me? How do I experience them in my body? What enslaves me? Where is Christ inviting me to greater freedom in my life?

Colloquy with first Mary, then Jesus, then God or sacred Other about your experience with the Two Standards meditation. Ask each of them to help you hear and respond to Christ's song.

Second Week
Week 22 – Ways of Loving

"*When we begin to imagine a different world, a different societal structure,*
a different way of relating to the divine and ourselves,
we can find creative and subversive ways to question and resist oppression."
- Kat Armas

This week we begin to look at Jesus' healing ministry along with 2 more of Ignatius' exercises related to spiritual freedom and understanding what it means to be in loving relationship with all that is. You may want to engage creatively with some or all of these exercises, using poetry, art, dance or any other medium.

Intention: to know Jesus more intimately, to love Jesus more deeply, and to follow Jesus more closely.

22.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 5, 8]
Read: Three Groups of People (handout)
Practice: Described in the handout
Closing: "El Shaddai" Jess Bauer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoDA8z_XBEE

22:2 [EF 1, 3, 7, 10, 11, 12]
Read: Mark 1:29-31
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, and/or any character in the story and/or sacred Other.

22:3 [EF 11, 12]
Read: Mark 7:24-30
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, and/or any character in the story and/or sacred Other.

22.4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10]
Read: Three Phases of Humility (handout)
Practice: Described in the handout.
Closing: "It's Always Love" – Carrie Newcomer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuaexqBmtXc

22.5 [EF 6, 11, 12]
Read: Mark 8:22-26
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, and/or any character in the story and/or sacred Other.

22.6
Repeat any day this week.

22.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources

Kat Armas. *Abuelita Faith*, 2021.

THREE GROUPS OF PEOPLE – A MEDITATION

"'What is the one thing I refuse to turn over to God's care?
What is my "no" point?
What do I find myself playing mind games around
rather than letting go and trusting in God's love?'"
- Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

This is a meditation offered by Ignatius to explore more deeply the concept of spiritual freedom. In the Two Standards exercises, we listened to be able to identify the songs that lead us towards and away from the Sacred. With this meditation, we consider what keeps us from being able to hear the music at all. What are we so attached to that it becomes like noise-cancelling headphones blocking out the sound of the Sacred, or like sticking our fingers in our ears and chanting, "lalalala" when we start to hear the Sacred's song.

This exercise involves a hypothetical situation about how three groups of people respond to that situation. There is no judgment attached to any of these three groups. All are faithful people, with good intentions, who seek a closer relationship to the Divine. All sincerely want God's kin-dom to flourish. Their responses are points on a continuum of willingness to work towards that goal. This is an imaginative exercise about noticing, about awareness, and about self-knowledge.

Begin by taking a few slow, deep, centering breaths. Imagine yourself wrapped in the quilt of Love as you reflect on the situation and what would be your likely response. Don't overthink it.

The Setting – Imagine that the people in each group have each acquired something very valuable. They may have worked hard to acquire it, or it could be a windfall. Perhaps they won the lottery or got a big bonus at work. Maybe they gained fame or a high-profile job. Or perhaps they came into possession of some special thing. Whatever it is, it has the potential to be used to significantly further God's work in the world, and these people know that.

First Group – The people in this group treat this as a gift to themselves personally, something that belongs to them and which they deserve. It is something they have difficulty giving up. Ignatius would say they have a "disordered attachment" to it. They say things to themselves like, "I would like to use this to help, but I just can't right now. Maybe when [fill in the blank] I will do it." They say prayers of gratitude for this gift, but never think to ask God how best to use it. How do you think those in this group might use their gift?

Second Group – The people in this group recognize that this is a gift given by God to them to work for the good of the kin-dom. They are grateful not only for the gift, but for the opportunity to be of service to others. They may sit down and discuss among themselves how to allocate the money or use the gift, but they hold some back ("for a rainy day"), or they say things to themselves like, "Maybe if I do this other thing for God, I can keep this gift." They never ask God how they could best use the gift but ask God only to bless what they themselves have decided to do. They remain overly attached either to the gift itself or to the power and control to determine how the gift will be used. How do you think those in this group might use their gift?

Third Group – The people in this group don't see the gift as theirs in any way. It belongs to God, and they are simply the instruments that allow the gift to be used for the good of the kin-dom. They rely on the Spirit for how to best use the gift, listening deep inside for Spirit's guidance. They take no action until they are clear in their hearts on that guidance and confirm that inner knowing by discussing it in community.

Reflection – In which group would you feel more at home and why? Does your answer change depending on what the gift is? What if the gift was not a thing, but time, or life, or health, or the life and health of someone close to you? Does that change things?

Colloquy -- Share your reflections on this with Jesus, Mary, or sacred Other.

Selected Sources
Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed, 2nd ed.,* 2022.
Louis Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises*, 2010.

THREE PHASES OF HUMILITY – A MEDITATION

"*The words* humility *and* human
are both rooted in the Latin homo*,*
meaning the ground or the earth—the humus*."*
- Lyanda Lynn Haupt

"*Humility is authenticity*."
- Joan Chittister

"*Christianity rooted in the love of Christ has no room for power that oppresses*
but advocates for power that breathes only humility."
- Kaitlin Curtice

This meditation is an adaptation of Ignatius' "Three Degrees of Humility." From an ecofeminist perspective, humility is a quality of loving relationship—understanding and living out what it means to be fully human in relationship to a larger life force and a wider living community. Humility is a stance of openness, respect, and solidarity.

Humility reminds us of our interrelatedness and interdependence with all that is: Humans are creatures and, like the rest of Creation, are literally made both of the dust of the earth, *humus* ("*Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return*"), and of stardust from the formation of the universe. We humans, like all Creation, are also connected to the Source; we carry within us the divine light and are unconditionally loved by God. The value and virtue of humility, therefore, is an invitation to be the most authentically human we can be.

In Ignatius' time, the Latin word he used in his text, *humilitas*, would have been translated as "docility or openness to God's will." Unfortunately, this quality has been weaponized against women and others by defining the relationship so as to keep them subservient to the dominant and oppressive powers and principalities of the age. The dominant (and dominating) culture has often equated "God's will" with the will of males, whites, the rich, the church, the king or other government. "Humility" then becomes synonymous with "humiliation" and self-effacement. Yet Jesus repeatedly turned that hierarchy of authority on its head: "So the last will be first and the first will be last." (Matt. 20:16).

Genuine humility cannot be imposed on another, but it can be developed; as living beings, we are always growing, changing, becoming. The "phases" suggested below are dynamic stages that build on each other towards deeper and deeper relationship with the Divine, with humans, with the more-than-human world, with the planet, and even with the cosmos. Yet, this is not a linear process; you could say we "phase shift" all the time, at different moments, in different contexts. So built into the value and virtue of humility must be compassion and grace for ourselves as well as for others.

This meditation returns us to the roots of the word *humility*, in the earth and the ground of our being. It is an exercise in gauging the reality of where we are in our sense of relatedness and loving relationship. Like the meditation on "Three Groups of People," this meditation is about

noticing, awareness, and self-knowledge, not judgment. As you read through this meditation, assume all of the people described here are faithful people, who deeply love and seek to be in a right relationship with the Divine, who sincerely want God's kin-dom to flourish and to work towards that goal.

Begin by taking a few slow, deep, centering breaths. Imagine yourself wrapped in the quilt of Love as you reflect on the descriptions of these phases. Don't overthink it.

First Phase – People in the First Phase seek to be in right relationship with the Divine and others by following the rules or the law. This could include the appropriate legal codes, the written or unwritten rules of social interaction, or the dictates of religious tradition. For them, humility is about who they, as individuals, are in relationship to as described by the rules that protect the welfare of the people in the community. They practice love by placing those rules ahead of their own personal desires. As long as they understand what the rules are, and stay within those boundaries, they feel secure that they have done what is needed or required of them. They become anxious when the rules are unclear, and cautious in acting so as not to cross the line into "sin."

Second Phase – This phase builds on the First, but the orientation is slightly different. Instead of simply avoiding doing the wrong thing in relationships by scrupulously following the rules, people in the Second Phase focus on actively developing more and deeper relationships. They understand that loving means more than simple obedience to human rules or laws because the greatest commandment is love (Mark 12:29-31). For them, humility is about living within a wider web of relationships, understanding and recognizing how their individual actions affect those wider relationships. They have the spiritual freedom to let the welfare of the community guide their decision-making, whether that is the human community or the planetary community.

Third Phase – People in the Third Phase not only see the relationships of the wider community in which they live, they see the community and all within it with the eyes of Love, i.e., with God's eyes. They experience themselves as connected to all life and the Source of all life. When they look at a tree, their hearts recognize her as kin. Tapping into the light of God within, their own inner wisdom, they make choices that will put them most in tune with the song of Christ.

Reflection – Which phase do you feel most reflects your reality at this time of your life? Can you think of times when you have experienced the other phases?

Colloquy – Share your reflections with Jesus, Mary, and/or sacred Other.

<u>Selected Sources</u>
Kaitlin R. Curtice, *Native: Identity, Belonging, and Rediscovering God*, 2020.
Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 1999.
Lyanda Lynn Haupt, *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit*, 2021.
Louis Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises*, 2010.
Joseph A. Tetlow, SJ, *Choosing Christ in the World*, 1999.

Second Week
Week 23 – What do you desire?

"Throughout the Exercises,
one learns what Ignatius learned during his convalescence—
that God speaks to us through our thoughts, feelings,
desires, attractions, and resistances."
- Erin M. Cline

"*'Did it ever occur to you*
that perhaps Jesus might be waiting for you
to decide what you want to do
and then he will join you there?'"
- Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

In this week, we do a deep dive into Ignatius' approach to discernment – which is a spiritual practice, not simply about making decisions.

Intention: to become more aware of Spirit at work in my life and to deepen my friendship with Jesus.

23:1 [EF 1, 3, 12]
Read: John 1:35-39
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For (U2)" Luciana Zogbi & Gianfranco Casanova (cover)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h2tOx2wZGk

23:2 [EF 3, 6, 7, 8]
Read: Discernment of Spirits and First Way (handouts)
Practice: Described in First Way (handout)
Closing: "Sometimes You Just Know" – Pollyn (this is a dance tune, you are invited to dance with it)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_gPbYueq1s

23:3 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8]
Read: Discernment of Spirits - Second Way (handout)
Practice: Described in Second Way
Closing: "Deciding" by William Stafford
https://twitter.com/TheHudsonReview/status/821763752156680193

23.4 [EF 1, 3, 5, 6, 12]
Read: Luke 10:38-42
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.

Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, Martha, and/or sacred Other.

23.5 [EF 1, 2, 4, 8]
Read: Discernment of Spirits – Third Way
Practice: Described in Third Way
Closing: "The Flower" by Chelan Harkin
https://www.facebook.com/852401341798484/posts/the-flowernever-had-a-to-do-listnot-one-day-of-her-life-she-just-pointed-her-who/1641818352856775/

23.6
Repeat any day this week.
Remember when repeating to start with what had energy for you and continue from there, don't just redo the exercise.

23.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources

Erin M. Cline, *A World on Fire*, 2018.
Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women,* 2nd ed., 2022.

DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

"*Central to all discernment is identity, who one is before God.*
Identity is not a fixed reality handed to person at birth
but is created moment by moment as one responds to the choices presented in one's life.
The most basic component of discernment, then, concerns listening to oneself,
distinguishing the wisdom of the deepest self, through which God speaks,
from other voices and learning to trust this deep inner wisdom."
- Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

"*The discernment of spirits underlies all four weeks of the Exercises.*
Ignatius intended the Exercises to help people make decisions grounded in their faith,
whether this means making what Ignatius calls an 'election'
—a momentous decision or life choice—
or whether it simply means checking to be sure
one is heading in the right direction
or deepening a call one has already embraced.
Many believe that the deepest election for all exercitants
is their choosing, under grace,
to allow Christ to take over more and more of themselves,
with the result that the particular choices coming from the exercitant
(during the Exercises and afterward),
are shaped by that deeper electing."
- Erin M. Cline

The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* is considered to be one of the classic Christian texts on the practice of discernment. Discernment in this context means more than simply making choices. Referring back to the Two Standards exercise, it is akin to listening for the Divine song and attuning our lives to sing and dance along.

But it is also about making choices—big choices, small choices, daily choices, once-in-a-lifetime choices—and Ignatius provides a variety of tools to assist in that process. Using those tools, we pay attention to signs of the Spirit's guidance coming from both external sources and from our own inner wisdom as experienced in feelings, thoughts, desires, dreams, intuition, and bodily sensations. Our old friend, spiritual freedom, is part of this. We want our choices to be made freely, in tune with God's song of love, rather than because we are hooked by disordered attachments.

Throughout the *Exercises*, but particularly in the daily Examen, we have been paying attention to the interior movements of our soul: the consolations and desolations, the feelings of attraction or repulsion, desires and discontents. Speaking from his 16th Century worldview, Ignatius believed those interior movements were caused by spirits—"good" spirits and "evil" spirits—forces in the cosmic struggle of which we are a part. While modern psychology and neuroscience may give us different terminology and ways to understand these interior movements, Ignatius was describing

a very real felt experience. Attention to those movements provides data that is useful in the process of discernment.

Ignatius describes 3 ways (or "times") of approaching discernment. None of these approaches are unique to Ignatius. What is unique is how Ignatius weaves these together and connects them to spiritual experience. I will call these 3 ways of discernment:

1. *Inner Certainty*
2. *Prayer Data*
3. *Rational Analysis*

We will spend some time with each of these interrelated ways. All provide tools help us discern between two good choices, two faithful or healthy choices. Which one is more in tune with God's song of love in us? Further, for each of these ways, Ignatius recommends confirming your choice using one of the other ways, so involving both heart and head.

Lastly, discernment is an ongoing and evolving process. Even decisions, such as marriage or pursuing a religious vocation, that in Ignatius' time would be once-in-a-lifetime decisions, are rarely permanent. God's call to us can change over time. We change, our choices change us, the circumstances that led to our original choice can change. We need to remain open to Spirit's continual leading and be flexible enough to change direction when our discernment leads us in new directions.

Selected Sources
Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au, *The Discerning Heart: Exploring the Christian Path*, 2006.
Erin M. Cline, *A World on Fire*, 2018.
Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed,* 2nd Ed., 2022.

FIRST WAY – INNER CERTAINTY

"*Sometimes you just know/how it's gonna go*"
- Pollyn

"*Earth's crammed with heaven,*
And every common bush afire with God,
But only she who sees takes off her shoes;
The rest sit round and pick blackberries."
- Elizabeth Barret Browning (adapted)

The First Way of discerning is when we experience a sense of piercing clarity about a particular choice. Ignatius phrased it this way: "The first time is, when God our Lord so moves and attracts the will, that without doubting, or being able to doubt, such devout soul follows what is shown it" (SE 175). It's a moment when everything "falls into place," when you have an inner sense of certainty and "you just know."

One example of this from scripture is the Apostle Paul's conversion after his experience on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:1-22) We've already seen some other examples in this retreat, where people just knew: Simeon and Anna just knew the baby was the Messiah, Jesus called his disciples, and they just knew they had to follow. But these First-Way experiences do not have to be dramatic or extraordinary. They can be small moments of inner knowing or peace about a decision or action, a quiet epiphany.

Native American author Stephen Graham Jones describes this First Way beautifully: "Sometimes you just know what you're doing is the only thing to be doing. That the world is conspiring all around you to make it happen, like, not just giving you permission, but herding you the direction you need to go, giving you secret nods and obvious hand signals, and getting everything out of the way so you have the clearest path possible."

Some are skeptical about how often First Way moments happen, and we cannot expect that this type of experience will come to us every time we need to make a decision. But perhaps how often this occurs may be more a question of how open we are to seeing the signs, whether we are paying attention. In my life, the times I have experienced a more dramatic epiphany (and there have been a couple) have come after I missed, ignored, or discounted many smaller nudges of the Spirit. It is only looking back that I see what I would have noticed if I had been more open to the myriad ways, mysterious and ordinary, that Spirit speaks to us. If I had paid more attention, I could have saved myself a headache from being knocked off my metaphorical horse.

It is also worth mentioning that these experiences are themselves ripe for discernment, particularly if they involve significant life decisions. The other ways of discernment, or even processing the event with a trusted friend or spiritual director, can help confirm or affirm that inner knowing.

Practice

1. Reflect on whether you have ever had a time of inner certainty about a decision or a choice you were making? Remember that it does not need to have been about a major life-changing decision, like whether to marry or make a big move. It is the feeling of inner knowing or peace about a choice that you are listening for in your life. If you can't bring any such moments in your past to mind, that's okay, just notice that. If you do remember something like this, write the story in as much detail as you remember. What did you feel in your body? What emotions? What did you do? Did you follow it? Why or why not? What happened then? What, if anything, did you do to confirm your own inner knowing? Read what you wrote, knowing you are held by Spirit as you do so. You may want to record the story and play it back so you can hear it. What do you notice as you hear or read it?
2. Reflect on whether there have been any times in your life when you looked back and realized you missed the signs? If so, write that story in as much detail as you can and read or listen to it. What do you notice?

Selected Sources

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (1857), Book VII, l. 812-826.
David L. Fleming, SJ, *Draw Me into Your Friendship: The Spirtual Exercises a Literal Translation & A Contemporary Reading*, 1996.
Stephen Graham Jones, *Night of the Mannequins*, 2020.
Elizabeth Liebert and AnneMarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women*, 2022.

SECOND WAY – PRAYER DATA

"To recover our human experience is, in fact, to place ourselves within the tradition of our ancestors, of those whose bodies vibrated as ours do when they experienced the attractions and repulsions we ourselves undergo as we relate to so many different situations in our lives."
- Ivone Gebara

"*The one estranged from her own wisdom will have a difficult time with discernment. . . .*
Inner wisdom often reveals itself through one's body, intuition, and feelings.
They provide essential data for assessing choices."
- Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

The Second Way is the approach most associated with Ignatian discernment: Holding our decision in prayer and listening for the interior movements such as consolations, desolations, intuition, desires, or fears. We also can check in with our body to see what wisdom it holds regarding the decision; how does it feel as you consider your options? By recognizing these various movements, and remaining unattached to a particular outcome, we develop clarity.

This second approach also involves engagement with our deepest desires. Often, we have been taught that focusing on or asking for our desires is selfish, but Spirit can speak to us through the deep longings of our heart.

First, we have to unearth the heartfelt desires we are carrying. Sometimes, we have to seriously ask ourselves, "What do I want?" before we are even aware of what we long for. Once we have recognized those desires, we have to accept them. Perhaps what we long for conflicts with the expectations of our family or society. Perhaps they conflict with other desires of our heart. There is a David Sipress cartoon in the *The New Yorker* of two people talking with the caption: "My desire to be well-informed is currently at odds with my desire to remain sane." Denying the desires of our heart does not make them go away. We need to notice and accept that yes, those are my deepest desires. Only then can we evaluate them and discern whether to act on them. That process of evaluating brings in the Third Way of discernment. First, we discern what our deepest desires are, which is a matter of the heart, an affective process, then we evaluate them, which is a rational process.

In the Second Way, Ignatius also invites use of imagination in prayer. Ignatius himself recalls how it was through his daydreams during his recovery that he discerned his path. When he imagined doing the chivalrous deeds of a knight, he initially felt excited and uplifted, but those feelings faded. When he dreamed of imitating the lives of saints in serving God like Saint Francis or Saint Dominic, his feelings of hopeful excitement did not wane, but remained strong and compelling.

Through the imagination we can visualize how the options before us might end up. For example, we can imagine ourselves making a decision and then live as if we had made that decision. How does it feel? We can also imagine the consequences of that decision and feel the effects in our bodies. You can also use spiritual imagination to consult with Jesus, Mary, your ancestors, sacred Others – any who might provide insight or support. We can consult with our body, asking

it what wisdom it may have for us about the decision in front of us. We can take a walk, run, or dance with our decision, and see if that movement brings any wisdom to the surface.

Ignatius also offers 3 specific imaginative exercises for discernment:

1. Imagine talking to a stranger who is facing the same decision as you. How would you respond to them? What advice would you give? (SE 185)
2. Imagine you are on your deathbed, looking back over your life to this moment when you are making this decision. Which choice would you have wanted to have made now? (SE 186)
3. Imagine meeting God or Jesus or your ancestors after your death. Which choice would you like to tell them about? (SE 187)

As you discern, you can use one of these methods repeatedly or try several. Each time you engage in these practices, pay attention to your interior movements and any other noticings you have as data. For example, do you notice any patterns? Like decisions made the First Way, even after you have discerned a choice using the Second Way, Ignatius instructs us to seek confirmation of that choice, particularly if it is a major life-changing decision, using the rational, analytical methods of the Third Way.

<u>Practice</u>

1. Set a timer for 5 minutes. In your journal, complete these sentences as many times and in as many ways as you can in 5 minutes. Don't overthink it; just write whatever comes to your mind.
    a. I wish . . .
    b. I desire . . .
    c. I want . . .
    d. I feel like . . .
    e. I would like . . .
    f. I long for . . .
2. Reflect on what you wrote for the sentences in 1. What do you notice? Try to notice without judgment.
3. What decisions or choices for your life are you carrying today? These could be simple, day-to-day choices, or major life-altering choices. Make a list of all that occur to you. Read it over. What do you notice? Try to notice without judgment.
4. Choose one of those decisions, it doesn't have to be the most important. Try one or more of the Second Way methods suggested above. Don't worry about making a decision today, just pay attention to your interior movements. Collect that information as data in your discernment process.

Selected Sources

Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au, *The Discerning Heart: Exploring the Christian Path*, 2006.
Ivone Gebara, *Longing For Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*, 1999.
Elizabeth Liebert and AnneMarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 2nd ed., 2022.
Nancy Reeves, *I'd Say Yes, God, If I Knew What You Wanted*, 2001.

THIRD WAY – RATIONAL ANALYSIS

"It's funny: I always imagined when I was a kid that adults
had some kind of inner toolbox full of shiny tools:
the saw of discernment, the hammer of wisdom, the sandpaper of patience.
But then when I grew up I found that life handed you these rusty bent old tools –
friendships, prayer, conscience, honesty –
and said 'do the best you can with these, they will have to do'.
And mostly, against all odds, they do."
- Anne Lamott

"*There is no way to live as an isolated individual."*
- Sallie McFague

The Third Way of discernment is very similar to what you would find in any contemporary guide to good decision-making. In this approach, Spirit guidance is sought through the process of reasoning and analysis. The Divine works through the head as well as through the heart.

This is where one in discernment writes a detailed description of the options being considered, lists of all the relevant factors affecting the choice, the pros and cons for each choice, etc. This is also where data from sources outside ourselves is considered. This could be empirical data from scientific or other research, this could be the input of affected persons such as family or co-workers, this could be social or cultural rules or expectations.

The difference between Ignatius' approach and secular self-help strategies is that this whole reasoning process is placed in the context of tuning our life to God's song. Be aware of any disordered attachments that may sway your analysis one way or the other. Seek to make this decision in true freedom, listening only to harmonize with the music of the Divine.

Most of our decisions affect others. This is obviously the case if I am discerning whether to take a job in another city. This may impact my family, my current place of employment, and those I work with, my friends, my religious or social communities, etc. But even decisions which on the surface seem to effect only ourselves will have ripple effects for others in the human and more-than-human world. For example, perhaps I am discerning whether to become a vegan, to stop eating meat or meat by-products such as dairy. It's a major life-altering decision, so I approach it prayerfully and intentionally. I research the two options, meat and no-meat diets. My research shows that a plant-based diet has a lower environmental impact than eating meat, because livestock emit a large amount of greenhouse gas, which contributes to global warming. However, I also notice at my grocery store that all of the fruit and vegetables offered have been shipped from another continent. A lot of fossil fuel is burned in the transportation process – particularly if shipped by airplane. Further, our choices of what to eat affect the people who produce, package, ship, and sell the food. Our choices affect the plants or animals we consume. If we eat together with other members of our family, does that mean meat will no longer be served to them? How would they feel about that? My research also reveals that it is difficult, though not impossible, to give growing children adequate nutrition using only plant-based foods. These are just a few data points in the analysis. We need to be aware that our individual choices are not made in a vacuum,

because we are connected to a wider network of relationships with others in the world we share. It is unlikely, and maybe not even advisable, to do this level of analysis for each choice we make, as it would become overwhelming and paralyzing. But once we begin thinking about these connections, we become more aware that we do not, and cannot, live as isolated individuals, and that fact will necessarily impact both our decisions and the consequences of our decisions. The awareness of our interrelationship with others and the planet needs to be part of our discernment process.

No matter how much research and analysis we do, there are rarely any perfect choices. We make the best choices we can with the information and the circumstances before us. But, for Ignatius, confirmation of that choice is essential, particularly for major life decisions. Just as Ignatius suggests that decisions made using the methods of the Second Way be confirmed using rational analysis, decisions made using methods of the Third Way can be confirmed using the affective methods of the Second Way. For example, having rationally made a choice to become a vegan, I can then lift that decision up in prayer, imagine life as a vegan, and pay attention to the interior movements I experience. How does it feel? Do I feel excitement or peace as I imagine this new lifestyle? Or do I feel a sense of dread? Am I feeling consolation or desolation at this choice?

When the choice is a matter of employment or vocation, there are often others who have input that becomes part of the confirmation process. I may feel drawn to apply for a particular job or occupation, but I apply and do not get the job, or I repeatedly get passed over for promotion. Spirit can be speaking to us through that as well.

Practice

1. Refer back to your list of decisions or choices you are carrying from 24.3.
2. Write a description of the options in some detail. What factors are involved in this decision? What are the pros and cons? Is there any research that would be helpful in making this decision? (You do not need to do it now, but you could.) Is there anyone you would like to talk to about this decision? Lift up all of this data to God in prayer or colloquy with Jesus, Mary, or sacred Other about this decision and your reasoning around it.

Selected Sources

Anne Lamott, *Travelling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*, 1999.
Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, 2021.

Second Week
Week 24 – Gifts of Ministry

"*Gifts from the earth or from each other establish a particular relationship,*
an obligation of sorts to give, to receive, and to reciprocate. . . .
This is the fundamental nature of gifts:
they move, and their value increases with their passage.
The fields made a gift of berries to us
and we made a gift of them to our father.
The more something is shared, the greater its value becomes. . . .
Our human relationship with strawberries is transformed by our choice of perspective.
It is human perception that makes the world a gift.
When we view the world this way,
strawberries and humans alike are transformed."
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

"*The incarnation means that following Jesus is not principally a spiritual matter,*
but it has to do with the basics of life:
food, water, health, education, and so on—
whatever makes up the good, earthly life for various species."
- Sallie McFague

In this week, we accompany Jesus in various aspects of his earthly ministry: teaching, feeding, healing, and challenging the status quo. Each provides an opportunity to deepen our friendship with Jesus, so remember to colloquy (have a conversation with) Jesus as part of each day – including the 7th day where you can invite Jesus and/or a sacred Other to help you see any patterns or wisdom in your response to the scriptures this week. This week is a good opportunity to playfully or creatively engage with these stories in any way that helps you engage with them more deeply. Also, be sure to keep up your daily Examen practice.

Intention: to know Jesus more intimately, to love Jesus more deeply, and to follow Jesus more closely.

24:1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 12]
Read: Mark 4:35-41
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story, and colloquy.
Closing: Stepped breath prayer based on Psalm 46:10
INHALE/EXHALE: "Be still and know / that I am God"
"Be still and know / that I am"
"Be still / and know"
"Be still" / silence
"Be" / silence
Silence – focus on breath
Silence – let your focus relax and breathe naturally for at least 5 minutes

24:2 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 12]
Read: Mark 10:13-16
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story, and colloquy.
Closing: *Visio Divina* – "Gimmie Five" photograph by Andy Seliverstoff
https://fineartamerica.com/featured/gimme-five-andy-seliverstoff.html

24:3 [EF 1, 2, 3, 7, 11, 12]
Read: John 6:1-15
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story, and colloquy.
Closing: "Room at the Table" – Carrie Newcomer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92OM5bdQ4N4

24.4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 12]
Read: Mark 12:38-44
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story, and colloquy.
Closing: 5 minutes quiet meditation, walking if circumstances permit

24.5 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 11, 12]
Read: Luke 19:1-10
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story, and colloquy.
Closing: *Visio divina* – Sycamore tree in Jericho (there are a couple of images to choose from, or reflect on them all)
https://www.beinharimtours.com/zacheus-sycamore/#:~:text=The%20Biblical%20Story%20of%20Zacchaeus%27%20Sycamore%20Tree&text=Zacchaeus%20ran%20ahead%20and%20climbed,at%20his%20house%20that%20night.

24.6
Repeat any day this week.
Remember when repeating to start with what had energy for you and continue from there, don't just redo the exercise.

24.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you. What has moved you this week?
- Colloquy with Jesus and/or sacred Other about your prayer experiences this week.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013.
Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, 2021.

Second Week
Week 25 - Healing

"Are you sure, sweetheart, that you want to be well?. . .
Just so's you're sure, sweetheart,
and ready to be healed,
cause wholeness is no trifling matter.
A lot of weight when you're well."
—Toni Cade Bambara

This week includes a selection of healing stories. These stories not only offer an opportunity to continue to deepen our relationship with Jesus, but to explore what areas in our own lives need healing, and indeed what "healing" even means. In our context, what does it look like, what does it feel like to be "well"?

In addition to your colloquy with Jesus, consider having conversations with other figures in the story such as those healed, and with sacred Others.

Intention: to know Jesus more intimately, to love Jesus more deeply, to follow Jesus more closely, and to make space for Jesus to offer healing in my life in whatever way is needed.

25.1 [EF 1, 3, 6, 12]
Read: Luke 7:11-17
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story, and colloquy.
Closing: "I am Sending You Light" – Melanie DeMore, Julie Wolf
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIsZuoNFtXg

25.2 [EF 1, 3, 6, 12]
Read: Mark 5:21-43
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, the hemorrhaging woman, Jairus's daughter, and/or sacred Other.

25.3
Practice: Repeat contemplation of Mark 5:21-43. You may wish to enter the story from a different perspective or engage this scripture using art.
Closing: "I Dreamed of Rain" – Heather Houston
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYru3tmQRTo

25.4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10]
Read: Excerpt from "Making Kin With Disability" – Sophie Strand (handout)
Practice: Journal or Art Journal anything that comes up for you from this reading
Closing: Breath Prayer from Cole Arthur Riley. Place your hand on your chest to feel the breath enter and leave your body. (INHALE) This flesh is sacred (EXHALE) I contain the divine.

25.5 [EF 1, 3, 6, 12]
Read: John 11:1-46, 54
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, Lazarus, Mary, Martha, and/or sacred Other.

25.6
Practice: Repeat contemplation of John 11:1-46, 54. You may wish to enter the story from a different perspective or engage this scripture using art.
Closing: "When Jesus Wept"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOVSfYFhNZw

25.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.
- Repeat any exercises where you feel called to go deeper.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week.

Selected Sources:
Toni Cade Bambara, *The Salt Eaters*, 2000.
Cole Arthur Riley, *Black Liturgies: Prayer, Poems, and Meditations for Staying Human*, 2024.

"Making Kin with Disability" (excerpt) – Sophie Strand
(from her blog *Make Me Good Soil* – January 12, 2024)

Very often these days I am asked for exercises that will encourage greater ecological embodiment and connection. Very often these days I am invited into panels and conversations and events where ecological awareness and embodiment assumes an able body. A body that can move and travel and seek. We are encouraged to walk and find sit spots. To grow our own food. To put our bodies in "nature". I'm guilty of this as well. When I am well enough, I love to walk and find it the easiest way to fall into step with the animals and fungi and plants around my home. But too often conversations about kinship and ecology leave behind those who might have the most to offer about how to engage with landscapes that are not always pure and able-bodied. In fact, most ecosystems these days share more kinship with disabled bodies given that they have been changed and interrupted by pollution and anthropogenic development. I have been offering more and more as someone with incurable genetic illness and PTSD, that it is to the neurodivergent, the chronically ill, the disabled, the terminally ill, the survivors who we must turn for information on how to come into relationship with beings and landscapes that are intimate with harm and impairment.

What if your "sit spot" wasn't in a forest or meadow? What if it was in the wild, feral ruins of your own body? This is not conceptual to me. This is my lived, uncomfortable and simultaneously generative experience. Many days lately I have not been able to leave bed. Back in 2010 I barely left bed for an entire year and was hardly able to even make it to the bathroom. I learned light that year. Second by second the slight gradations in color staining the wall opposite my bed. Anemic lavender in spring dusk. Dusty red sunsets in July. I learned about how the Valley around me inhaled and exhaled pollen-plush wind into my room on a scale much slower than my own agitated respiration. And I realized, then, that although I loved the wild, the streams, and the mountains, there was an ecosystem in my room. There was a whole world of species living and dying and disagreeing and dancing within my own flesh.
I learned that the microbes and fungal infections that my failing immune system invited inside were a part of my ecosystem. They lived in me just as I lived in the Hudson Valley. They walked my long pathways just as I had, for years, walked the long pathways outside the town of Woodstock.

Today I am not well enough to go to a sit spot. To visit my bird family and my river. But today I realize that kinship is not simple or external. It is contaminated and complex and interwoven into my very being. It is here to teach me I am not the main character of the story. I may not even be a character. I may be the setting. The landscape of microbial love stories.
As we seek to imagine ways to become ecologically embodied and environmentally aware, let us not forget to ask the bodies that know best what it is to be an ecosystem. The disabled and sick bodies that know best what it may feel like to be a polluted river, a clear-cut forest, a pesticide-addled population of honeybees.

Second Week
Week 26 – Second Week Review

"*Like the river downstream, you're not the same person you were upstream. You begin to define yourself in terms of who you are becoming, not who you have been.*"
- Gloria Anzaldúa

This week of exercises concludes the Second Week phase of the *Spiritual Exercises*. This is an opportunity to look back and mine the work you did for more insights, notice patterns, repeat any exercises that feel unfinished, or return to any exercises you may have skipped over the first time through that you want to explore. The practice of repeatedly reflecting back allows new wisdom and connections to surface. Also, this review gives you a chance to notice what changes have been happening in you since we began the Second Week three months ago. Looking back, you may be surprised by what you notice.

Intention: to be open and notice the work of the Spirit within me.

26.1
Look over your journal for weeks 12-19. Choose an exercise that you want to repeat or explore an exercise that you skipped the first time through.
Closing: Use the closing from the exercise you chose.

26.2
Review your journal for weeks 12-19, including what you did yesterday (26.1). What do you notice? Where did you feel that you were moving towards God/Spirit? Where did you feel you were moving away? Journal your noticings.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, or sacred Other about what you noticed.

26.3
Contemplatively read your journal for weeks 12-19, including what you did this week for 26.1 and 26.2 in the mode of *lectio divina*, underlining or highlighting words or phrases that stood out or shimmered for you. Write those words or phrases on a separate plain piece of paper and chose one of the following practices:

1. Make a prayer icon from them using the *Praying in Color* technique.
2. Write a poem that incorporates as many of those words or phrases as you can. Sometimes it helps to cut out the words and rearrange them on the page until they start to form the bones of a poem.
3. Offer those words or phrases to the earth in any way that feels right to you. For example, you might write them in sand and contemplate them or walk or sit outside repeating them like a mantra.
4. Playfully or creatively engage with those words or phrases in any way that feels interesting to you.

Closing: Choose any closing from weeks 12-19.

26.4
Look over your journal for weeks 20-25. Choose an exercise that you want to repeat or explore an exercise that you skipped the first time through.
Closing: Use the closing from the exercise you chose.

26.5
Review your journal for weeks 20-25, including what you did yesterday (26.4). What do you notice? Where did you feel that you were moving towards God/Spirit? Where did you feel you were moving away? Journal your noticings.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, or sacred Other about what you noticed.

26.6
Contemplatively read your journal for weeks 20-25, including what you did this week for 26.4 and 26.5 in the mode of *lectio divina*, underlining or highlighting words or phrases that stood out or shimmered for you. Write those words or phrases on a separate plain piece of paper and either:

1. Make a prayer icon from them using the *Praying in Color* technique.
2. Write a poem that incorporates as many of those words or phrases as you can. Sometimes it helps to cut out the words and rearrange them on the page until they start to form the bones of a poem.
3. Offer those words or phrases to the earth in any way that feels right to you. For example, you might write them in sand and contemplate them or walk or sit outside repeating them like a mantra.
4. Playfully or creatively engage with those words or phrases in any way that feels interesting to you.

Closing: Choose a closing from weeks 20-25.

26.7
Prayerfully review your journal for this past week as you have gone back over the exercises of the Second Week. Do any new insights or noticings surface? How would you describe your relationship with Jesus at this point? With Mary? How do you feel about proceeding into the Third Week of the *Spiritual Exercises?*
Closing: "Patient Trust" by Pierre Tielhard de Chardin
https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/prayer-of-theilhard-de-chardin/

Selected Sources:
Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro*, 2015.

Third Week
Week 27 – Jerusalem

"*Given the inevitable end of this journey with Jesus,*
why would anyone choose to enter the passion week?
The answer lies in the mysterious and compelling call to the depths of discipleship
and in the experience of having fallen in love."
- Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

The Third Week begins as Jesus turns his face towards Jerusalem and all that awaits him there. The jubilation of his entry into Jerusalem is tempered by the undercurrents of opposition to him and his teaching.

It is important to keep up your daily Examen, paying attention to the consolations and desolations you experience as you move through the sometimes challenging material of the Third Week.

Intention: to remain open and present to Jesus in his sorrow and struggle, and to myself as I journey with him.

27.1 [EF 1, 3, 7, 12]
Read: The Third Week (handout)
Practice: Change out your altar to reflect your intention for the Third Week or phase of the *Exercises*. You may wish to include a cross, and symbols or objects that invoke the five senses (vision, sound, scent, taste, texture), which will be important to ground us as we go through the Third Week.
Closing: Contemplate your altar as a focus for 5 minutes of silent meditation.

27.2 [EF 1, 12]
Read: Matthew 13:54-58
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus.

27.3 [EF 1, 3, 6, 12]
Read: Luke 13:34-35
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Visio Divina – Cackle Hatchery Hen with Chicks (handout)

27.4 [EF 12]
Read: Luke 19:28-40
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: "Hosanna" Jesus Christ Superstar
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iE6GhHcfKN0

27.5 [EF 8]
Read: Nuances of the Discernment of Spirit (handout)
Practice: Do the practice described in the handout
Closing: Listen to a piece of music that brings to mind Christ's song.

27.6
Repeat any day this week. Remember that for Ignatius repetition means continuing the work you did and going deeper, not simply doing the exercise over again.

27.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources

Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed,* 2nd ed., 2022.

THE THIRD WEEK

"*Let us run with perseverance the race set before us,*
looking to Jesus . . .
who for the sake of the joy that was set before him
endured the cross, disregarding its shame.
Consider him . . .
so that you don't grow weary or lose heart."
– Hebrews 12:1-3 (NRSV)

"*Many people generally know that the Jesus they've been singing about and singing to—*
and the beloved symbol of his cross—
has historically been used as a weapon of hate, pain, and oppression,
but something changes when a person first realizes how deep the colonial wounds truly run. This shift is colossal. Disorienting.
What do you do with this information . . . ?"
- Kat Armas

"*I often find myself wondering how cruelty, choices that hurt others, and hate*
can coexist with grace, goodness, and love.
Is it possible to hold space for them all and hear what they have to say?"
- Heidi Barr

"*This is a prophetic moment in the Exercises,*
for in a world so divided, we proclaim that we belong to one another."
- Kevin O'Brien, SJ

In the Third Week or phase of the *Spiritual Exercises*, we walk with Jesus in the experiences of the end of his human life. We carry with us our experiences of the Second Week and the relationships we have built with Jesus, Mary, and sacred Others and let them deepen as we accompany them in their suffering and sorrow.

In the spiral way of the *Exercises*, in this Third phase we circle back to the work we have done about sin and evil, incarnation, discernment, and connection. At the same time, we explore grief, surrender, solidarity, betrayal, and compassion. We will wrestle with the questions that always arise in the face of suffering. We will also imagine and lift up the women and sacred Others in the cracks and corners of the Passion story. All of this is done within the loving embrace of the Divine.

Having spent so much time with Jesus in the *Exercises* so far, particularly in the Second Week, Jesus is no longer some abstract idea, or just someone who lived a long time ago, but a more real presence in our lives, our friend. Now this friend is going to suffer and die, and there is nothing we can do but stand with him and offer our own love, honesty, humility, and witness. We are present for Jesus as we might be by the bedside of a dying friend or family member.

In Jesus' struggles, in his suffering and in his death on the cross, we come face to face with our own suffering and mortality, that of those we love, and that of the whole earth. As we stand with Jesus through this difficult time, we stand in solidarity with all who suffer.

Ignatius has a few interesting notes about the exercises for this Week. First, Ignatius recommends that you choose the place you are praying these Third Week exercises with some care and attention. He suggests praying these exercises in a darkened room, so that your environment matches the mood of the exercises of the Third Week. For some, that suggestion may not resonate. Do what feels right for you. Second, you may find that the colloquy in this Week to be more about listening to Jesus or Mary, as one would a trusted friend who confides in us in difficult times, than about sharing our own consolations and desolations. Know, however, that if we are struggling with the emotions and memories that the exercises of this Week bring up, Jesus remains available to us, as does Mary and the ancestors and sacred Others who accompany us. Draw on them as needed.

Selected Sources
Kat Armas, *Abuelita Faith*, 2021.
Heidi Barr, *Collisions of Earth and Sky*, 2023.
David L. Fleming, *Draw Me Into Your Friendship*, 1996.
Kevin O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 2011.

Figure 5. *Hen and Chicks. Source:* Free stock image available on create.vista.com

NUANCES of the DISCERNMENT OF SPIRIT

"*People who deny the existence of dragons are often eaten by dragons. From within.*"
— Ursula K. Le Guin

"Consolation is the affective reverberation of the work of the Holy Spirit that draws toward God, and desolation is the affective reverberation of the antispiritual that pulls in the opposite direction."
- Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

Throughout the *Exercises*, and particularly through the Examen and the discernment material, we've been paying attention to our interior movements of consolation and desolation. However, the more we pay attention the more subtle nuances we notice. Ignatius provided some additional guidance around these interior movements for those who have moved through the Second Week.

Consolation cannot simply be equated with happiness, with a positive or pleasant experience, or with being in an upbeat mood. Nor can desolation simply be equated with a negative or unpleasant experience, or with the feeling of being "blue" or "down." These are important signposts, but they are not the end of the story.

Consolation is any experience or feeling that brings us closer to the Divine. However, this can happen during the most painful or difficult of circumstances. Consider how in the midst of profound grief, or deep physical or emotional pain, we may experience a feeling of deep peace and the knowing that we can lean on God for comfort and strength. Consider also strong feelings of anger, sadness, or frustration over injustices done to other humans and the more-than-human world. These feelings, while painful, may have a divine source, as the Spirit works through them to bring about change in ourselves and our world.

At the same time, some things we feel or experience as pleasant may, in fact, mask deeper movements away from the Divine. This is called false or spurious consolation, as opposed to the true or authentic consolation which is of God. For example, having some wine and a good meal may give us a feeling of euphoria or well-being, for which we can be grateful, and God shares in our pleasure. But if that is or becomes part of a pattern of alcoholism or unhealthy overeating, it can draw us father away from God as the object of our addiction takes the place of true divine consolation.

Similarly, thoughts or desires to do holy work, for example seeking ordination to ministry or engaging in activism to promote social justice, can become twisted leading to overwork, neglect of our own health, or rupture in relationships with others—all of which draw us away from the Sacred. A desire to live and work for God's kin-dom can sometimes become a sense of pious superiority as we are caught up in our own mental or spiritual echo chamber and what we do becomes more about us than about God. There is a quality of selfishness to false consolation, although it may initially appear otherwise. Put in terms of Ignatius' worldview, the "evil spirit" often appears as "an angel of light" (SE 332), particularly for those trying to lead good, faithful lives.

We all experience false consolations at some point, no matter how much we would like to believe otherwise. Denial is not our friend because it can permit destructive thought patterns to harden and set within us; nor is self-judgment that leads to shame—both eat us up from the inside. We need to be aware and alert, and then engage what we notice of our interior movements with compassion and humility. Regular spiritual practices such as the Examen and contemplative prayer can help us notice when the music we are dancing to partakes more of the Enemy's song and less of the Christ's song; we can notice when our thoughts and actions have drawn us farther away from Love, farther away from relationship. It is the noticing that is important, because then we can choose different music, or turn around and walk the other way.

Finally, we can have longer periods of either consolation or desolation, when one interior movement shapes our whole experience of life. When we are in periods of consolation, it is important to mark those times, to have those memories to hold onto when we are no longer in consolation. Since desolation is a movement away from Love, from the Divine, it is important to discern when we are in such a period. "All depression has desolating reverberations, but depression and desolation may not be simply equated." (Liebert and Paulin-Campbell, 224) Nonetheless, the two are very similar and both dampen our ability to grow deeper into love and relationship. Ignatius advised those in desolation not to make major life decisions or changes (SE 318). At the same time, since Ignatius believed that periods of desolation amount to a spiritual attack, he also believed that those in desolation should actively resist that movement. One way to do this is to seek out those things that bring us consolation and to recall when we have experienced periods of consolation. Ignatius sees these periods of consolation and desolation as cyclical; we all experience both and neither lasts.

<u>Practice</u>

1. Reflect on whether you have experienced times of false consolation. If a memory surfaces, don't overthink it. Just notice what that was like. What about that experience suggests that it was false consolation?
2. Reflect on when you have experienced a period of desolation. If you recall such a time, what helped you get through it?
3. Reflect on when you have experienced periods of consolation. If you recall such a time, bring to mind that experience with as much detail as you can. Where were you? What did it look like? What did you hear, see, smell, touch or taste? Was someone else with you? If so, can you recall their facial expression, tone of voice? What happened? Write the story or record it so that you can bring it back to mind later.

<u>Selected Sources</u>

David L. Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship*, 1996.
Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader and the Imagination*, 2004.
Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 2nd ed., 2022.

Third Week
Week 28 – The Last Supper

"*Thou anointest my head with oil;*
My cup runneth over."
- Psalm 23:5b (KJV)

"*A woman anointed Jesus—who, where, when, why, and to what result?*
Each time we tell the story, the details may change.
And that's okay.
What story do we tell? How do we tell the story?
And what do we proclaim not only in memory of Jesus
but also 'in memory of' that risk-taking woman? . . .
I do wonder if Jesus took his cue from those anointing women,
who provided a service to him.
He does not always have to be original in order to be profound."
- Amy-Jill Levine

"It means something that the Eucharist, this lasting ritual of the presence and memory of God, is a physical nourishment as much as it is spiritual.
I once went to a church that gave everyone a whole slice of bread and they actually buttered it.
It felt wrong, but they had something so right.
I love that we don't just bow to the bread, we eat it—the body of God entering our bodies.
And I think God's supposed to taste good."
– Cole Arthur Riley

"*When I took communion for the first time, my mother handed me bread and said,*
'This means that God will always love you.'
Then she handed me juice and told me,
'This means God will never leave you.'
The heart of the Gospel: You are beloved.
You belong. You are never alone."
- Jacqui Lewis

This week begins with two versions of the story of the anointing of Jesus by a woman. You may remember we looked at another version back in the First Week. That was the version recorded in the Gospel of Luke, that Luke places substantially earlier in the timeline of Jesus' story. Mark, Matthew, and John place their versions of the story later, close to that last Passover meal Jesus would spend with his friends. Also, Mark's and Matthew's versions are substantially similar: An unnamed woman crashes a dinner party, she goes uninvited into someone else's home and pours expensive perfume over Jesus' head. John tells a similar story, but with some significant differences. We will pray with both. Pay attention to how the two stories land in your body.

The stories this week are full of sensory cues, particularly those in the Gospel of John. The senses of taste and smell are particularly tied to memory. Pay special attention to imagining the location of these stories and to applying your five senses as you enter the stories. The settings for

the stories this week are dinner parties, so there would be the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of a meal cooked for honored guests and friends. Then comes the smell of costly perfume that in the Fourth Gospel contrasts with the stench that came from Lazarus' tomb not many days earlier. Breathe in the sweet smell of perfume, feel the coolness of the water, taste the bread and the wine. And remember.

Intention: to welcome whatever this week brings as you accompany Jesus; perhaps sorrow, regret, and the ability to be present with him.

28.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 12]
Read: Mark 14:1-11
Practice: As you read the story, have nearby something that smells good: it could be perfume, or nice smelling soap or shampoo, or light a scented candle. *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: Breathing meditation with scent.

28.2 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 12]
Read: John 12:1-11
Practice: As you read the story, have nearby something that smells good: it could be perfume, or nice smelling soap or shampoo, or light a scented candle. Since this is a different scripture than we used yesterday, ideally chose a different scent for today. Use *lectio divina* then Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, Martha, and/or sacred Other.

28.3 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 12]
Read: John 13:1-17 (Jesus washes feet)
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: Foot Washing Meditation (handout) – you will need a small bowl of water, wash cloth, and towel.

28.4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 12]
Read: Mark 14:12-16
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: Have something to eat such as a cracker, cookie, a piece of bread, and something to drink. Eat and drink as you meditate on an image: "The Last Supper" by Irish artist Nora Kelly https://catholicpittsburgh.org/d/node/162.html

28.5 [EF 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12]
Read: John 15:12-17
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: "Where is Jesus Now?" – Sara Thomsen
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhkVGuyEXOs

28.6
Repeat any day this week. Remember that for Ignatius repetition meant continuing the work you did and going deeper, not simply doing the exercise over again.

28.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources

Amy-Jill Levine, *Entering the Passion of Jesus*, 2018.
Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh*, 2022.

FOOT WASHING MEDITATION
(Adapted from "Cradling" meditation by Joanna Macy)

Have available: bowl of warm water, wash cloth, towel. Optional: lotion.

[Note: This meditation invites you to meditatively wash your feet. However, it can also be done with your hands.]

Read the whole meditation over before you begin. Place the instructions where you can read them.

Sit so that you can comfortably reach your bare feet to wash them.
Take a few deep, centering breaths.

Wrap your hands around your left foot to cradle it.
Feet the weight of it.

Flex your ankle.
Note how the joint permits a variety of movements

Look at your foot, as if you had never seen this foot before.

Observe the articulation of bone and muscle.
Look at the sole of your foot and your toes.
Note the extraordinary intricacy of their inner structure.

What you now hold is an object unique in our cosmos.
It is a human foot of planet Earth.

In the primordial seas where once we swam, this foot was once a fin,
As it was again in our mother's womb.

Feel the energy and intelligence in this foot,
The fruit of a long evolutionary journey,
Of efforts to push, to climb, to run.

Note the arch, which distributes our weight as we stand upright,
Aids our balance and helps absorb the shock of each step.

Open your awareness to the journey it has made in this lifetime,
How it kicked the air when it emerged from the birth canal,
How it gradually learned to spread and hold the earth that we might stand,
How it learned to walk, to run, to kick, to swim, to climb, to dance.

There is nothing like it in all the universe.

Gently wash your left foot.

Use your hand to gently stretch your toes and massage each toe.
As you tenderly touch each toe and joint, visualize tension pouring out.

Massage your arch.
Gently massage the pads of your foot and the top.
Gently rotate your ankle.

To finish, set your foot down.
Visualize warm light and energy filling it, giving just what is needed at this moment.

Move to your right foot and repeat.
Gently wash your right foot.

Use your hand to gently stretch your toes and massage each toe.
As you tenderly touch each toe and joint, visualize tension pouring out.

Massage your arch.
Gently massage the pads of your foot and the top.
Gently rotate your ankle.

To finish, set your foot down.

Visualize warm light and energy filling it, giving just what is needed at this moment.

Place your two feet together.
Observe the subtle differences between the two.
Feel the life in them.
Note also their vulnerability.
No shell encases them.
They are covered in flexible, fragile skin,
So easy to burn or bruise,
Though the soles are tougher and rougher where they touch the ground.
To protect them we wear shoes.

These feet are instruments for sensing and knowing our world,
As well as for standing and walking.

Be aware of how much you want them to stay whole, intact in the time that is coming.
They have places to carry you, places you can't even guess at.

They will help you walk the road in front of you, walk beside others in friendship and solidarity,
Dance to the music of the Divine.

Let your feet, of their own intelligence, express desire that all be well with these feet.
Let your feet express your wish for the strength and wholeness of these feet,
That they may serve you faithfully.

With gratitude for the existence of these feet, let them rest as you contemplate them for a moment,
Breathe softly as you bring this meditation to a close.

Third Week
Week 29 – Jesus in the Garden

"*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,*
let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that easily distracts,
and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,
looking to Jesus . . . ."
- Hebrews 12:1-2a

We spend this week in the garden of Gethsemane with Jesus. In the story, Jesus asks his friends to stay with him, watch and pray; and so we shall. Instead of repeating one version of this story from the same gospel, we will look at the three slightly different versions in the gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Let each of them provide a layer to your contemplation of the story.

Take care with your preparation for the contemplations of this story. In Hebrew, Gethsemane (*Gat Shemanim*) means "oil press." So, the garden was probably the area within an olive grove where the olive press was located to make olive oil. Jesus would have been surrounded by olive trees. What could be seen at night in this place? Was there much moonlight? What do you smell? What do you hear? What beings, human or more-than-human, share that space with him?

Consider doing the contemplations outside at night. You can read the story and do your *lectio divina* first, then go outside while you enter the story. For at least one of the contemplations, consider entering the story from a more-than-human perspective. You might have with you a small bowl of olive oil, or some olives, so that you can inhale the aroma as you enter the story.

Intention: to welcome whatever this week brings as you accompany Jesus, perhaps sorrow, regret, and the ability to be present with him.

29.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12]
Read: Mark 14:32-42
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: "Stay With Me" - Taize
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r63EqwUp-7Y

29.2 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12]
Read: Matthew 26:36-46
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: "Gethsemane" by Mary Oliver
https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/-/media/files/wexnermedical/patient-care/patient-and-visitor-guide/patient-support-services/spiritual-and-pastoral-care/poems/gethsemane.pdf?la=en&hash=64ED9EAC7B66054787F198D9472DFD7ACD62FA19

29.3 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6]
Read: “A Minyan of Trees” (handout)
Practice: As described in the handout, which has its own closing.

29.4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12]
Read: Luke 22:39-46
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: “How Did I Make it Over” – Mahalia Jackson
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l49N8U3d0Bw

29.5 [EF 3, 6]
Read: “Welcoming Prayer” (handout)
Practice: Welcoming Prayer as described in handout that has its own closing.

29.6
Repeat any day this week.

28.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

A MINYAN OF TREES

"*I count ten trees.*
And place myself among them.
They are my minyan*.*
I rely on their strength, faith, and beauty.
Despair, fear, anger
Rise within me.
Bitterness threatens my prayers.
I reach for a tree
And breathe in its strength, presence and trust.
I lean my body against its trunk and close my eyes.
For a moment I feel the One.
I feel the One within this raw, vulnerable life.
I feel the One made manifest in trees, earth and sky.
I feel the One here, present.
And for a moment the bitterness becomes sweet."
- Rabbi Yael Levy

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was surrounded by olive trees. How may their presence have supported him in his time of prayer? In Jewish practice, a *minyan* is a group of 10 or more adult Jews needed for certain communal prayers, including the practice of saying *Kaddish*, a prayer of mourning said for 11 months after the death of a loved one, and *Birkat HaGomel*, a prayer for escaping a dangerous situation.

Rabbi Yael Levy reinterprets this ancient practice by asking 10 trees to make up her *minyan*. It is in community with these "strong and certain" beings that she makes her communal prayer.

<u>Practice</u>
Read the instructions over completely before beginning.

You are invited to do this prayer outside if you can. Your yard will suffice, a park would be even better. If that is not possible, find a window where you can look outside.

1. Identify 10 trees or shrubs or distinct larger rocks/boulders.
2. Ask each of the 10 individually (in your mind or out loud) if they would be willing to join you in prayer. Listen for a sense of assent or openness. If you feel some resistance from a particular one, ask another.
3. If you are outside, place yourself somewhere in the middle of that group of 10.
4. Take a few slow, centering breaths. Imagine yourself breathing with those trees/plants/rocks. You inhale the oxygen that plants exhale through photosynthesis. Breathe together with your *minyan* for a moment. Know that you are not alone, but surrounded by this natural community
5. Allow to rise to the surface something that is troubling you, or something that you are struggling with, that you wish to lift to God in prayer.

6. Hold that prayer in your mind and heart and touch each plant/rock, making gentle physical connection. If it is tree or rock, you can lean on it and feel its support. If doing this from inside, make visual connection with each one individually. Notice as many details of each as you can see.
7. When you have connected and prayed with all 10 in your *minyan*, bow to them in gratitude and bless them.

Adapted from:
Rabbi Yael Levy, "A Minyan of Trees," *A Way* In, January 14, 2021
https://www.awayin.org/teachings-archive/2021/minyan?rq=minyanhttps%3A%2F%2Fwww.awayin.org%2Fteachings-archive%2F2021%2Fminyan%3Frq%3Dminyan&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

WELCOMING PRAYER

"*Having this internal stance of welcome,*
not to pain or suffering itself,
but a hospitality to the unfolding of life
without our typical anxiety to control it,
can be at the ready and serve as a form of spiritual preparedness
that serves as a shelter in the storm."
- Lisa Colón DeLay

"*Be grateful for whoever comes,*
Because each has been sent
As a guide from beyond."
- Rumi

Originally developed by Mary Mrozowski from her work with Father Thomas Keating, the Welcoming Prayer invites us to a stance of openness to all our thoughts, emotions, sensations, uncertainties, desires, and fears. With this contemplative prayer, you acknowledge each thought or feeling that arises, without judgment and then release it to the Divine.

Several years later, she realized the fruit of all her work with the Welcoming Prayer.

> On a crowded sidewalk one spring day, a reckless driver ran into her, and she was pinned to a wall. In the middle of the shock and pain, Mrozowski prayed out loud, "Welcome, pain. Welcome, pain. Welcome, pain. I let go of my desire to change the pain." Her equanimity astonished panicky onlookers, and in the moment, this helped gather more composure for everyone during the disastrous situation. She eventually healed from the accident. (Colón Delay, 161).

You can now find several iterations of this prayer, but each has the essential elements of naming these inner guests and then letting them go.

<u>Practice</u>

1. Read these instructions over before you begin.
2. Begin by taking a few deep, centering breaths. Notice the movement of the air through your body as you inhale and exhale. Sit with your breath for a few moments.
3. If it feels right, ask for support in this prayer from Jesus, Mary, your ancestors, or sacred Other.
4. Let your focus drop into your heart space with the rise and fall of your chest.
5. Notice any feelings, emotions, thoughts, sensations, uncertainties, or fears in your body. For each one, name or otherwise acknowledge it and say to it, "Welcome."
6. Notice any judgment or inner commentaries that arise as you name these guests, and say to those thoughts as well, "Welcome."
7. Use the following phrase, or something similar that suits your needs, repeating it as long as you need to, returning to a place of inner calm: "I welcome what is. I let go of the desire to control or change the situation." You can say this to each thought, sensation, etc.

individually (e.g., “I let go of the desire to control or change the fear”) or say it after naming all of what arises within you in a particular prayer session.

8. Close by returning to your breathing.

Selected Sources
Lisa Colón DeLay, *The Wild Land Within,* 2021.
Rumi, “The Guest House,” *The Essential Rumi*, *New Expanded Edition*, edited by Coleman Barks, 2010.

Third Week
Week 30 – Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion

"Jesus' ministry to the oppressed resulted in his death on a cross.
Solidarity with the oppressed is likely to end this way,
as many of his loyal disciples over the centuries have discovered.
This suggests a theology of the cross:
reality has a cruciform shape."
- Sallie McFague

"*An ecofeminist, trinitarian vision of the universe and of humanity does not identify*
evil, destruction, and suffering as realities that are outside ourselves
and need to be eliminated by the use of violence,
nor does it say they should be accepted as 'God's will.'
Rather than pointing to 'the other' as the source of evil,
it recognizes that what we call evil is in ourselves;
in a certain sense, evil is also our body.
Evil is a relationship we ourselves construct.
It leads to the unraveling of the entire fabric of human life."
- Ivone Gebara

"*This is a world that demonizes those who transgress the system*
but has great sympathy for the system itself."
– Cole Arthur Riley

As we walk with Jesus through his arrest and trials, keep an eye out for the women hanging out in the corners of these stories. Also, as Jesus endures his ordeals, Ignatius invites us to notice the emotions that arise in us, but to keep our focus on Jesus. When we considered sin and evil in the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises, the focus was on us and on the love of God surrounding us. In weeks 30 and 31 of the Third Week, however, "we are no longer dwelling on our own sorrow; now we are sorrowing with Jesus. He and all who suffer are at the center of our meditation." (Saint-Jean) To stand in solidarity with those who suffer, you must set aside your own pain. This is an exercise in interior freedom.

These are difficult stories. Do whatever you need to remain grounded so that you can remain present to Jesus in his suffering. Notice, with curiosity not judgment, any places of resistance so that you can come back and explore that later. Remember that you can enter the story in whatever way feels appropriate for you, including as a witness rather than an active participant.

Intention: to welcome whatever this week brings as you accompany Jesus, and to be able to set aside whatever sorrow, anger, or regret you feel in order to be fully present with him.

30.1 [EF 1, 3, 9, 6, 12]
Read: Luke 22:47-53

Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: "Elégie" Rachmaninov – Sheku Kanneh-Mason
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJZsfIxUGFg

30.2 [EF 1, 3, 6, 9, 12]
Read: Matthew 26:57-58, 69-75
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: 5 minutes of silent meditation

30.3 [EF 1, 3, 6, 9, 12]
Read: Matthew 27:11-26
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: *Visio divina* with an image "Christ in Front of Pilate," Mihaly Munkacsy, 1881 (click on thumbnail image to enlarge)
https://www.wga.hu/html_m/m/munkacsy/trilog1.html

30.4 [EF 1, 3, 6, 9, 12]
Read: Mark 15:16-20
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: Contemplative walk or 5 minutes of silent meditation.

30.5 [EF 1, 3, 6, 9, 12]
Read: Mark 15:21-26
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story.
Closing: "A Final Sacrifice" – Luke Richards
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOubjdrVqk8

30.6
Repeat any day this week.

30.7
Savor the graces of the week
- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources

Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 2002.
Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant*, 2000.
Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh*, 2022.
Patrick Saint-Jean, *The Spiritual Work of Racial Justice: A Month of Meditations with Ignatius of Loyo*la, 2021.

Third Week
Week 31 – Dying

"*Mary teaches us that being a loving witness and presence*
is one of the most sacred things we can do for one another."
- Christine Valters Paintner

"*The healing work of unforming and re-forming requires a spiritual posture*
that enables us to look back and hold the past,
no matter how difficult or shameful."
- Cindy S. Lee

"*One cross cannot contain all sufferings or all crosses. . .*
Hence the importance of holding the memory of the crucified Jesus
together with the memory of others crucified, men and women alike. . . .
By analogy, I think of the crosses that development has imposed on different ecosystem . . . .
We are being invited to look beyond the cross of Jesus
so that we may think also of a broader and more specific salvation for all creation."
- Ivone Gebara

"*For those whose ancestors bore great evil into the world—*
which may very well be all of us—
the curse is only passed as you participate in it.
It is our responsibility to know and own the stories that have made us
in such a way that we forsake the curse.
This requires a sacred humility,
for humans quite readily accept their place in the glories of their ancestors
but remain woefully unwilling to accept the connection to their ills.
But it is precisely our failure to acknowledge the curses we've benefited from
that keeps us from full liberation."
– Cole Arthur Riley

"*We are all complicit.*
We've allowed the 'market' to define what we value
so that the redefined common good seems to depend
on profligate lifestyles that enrich the sellers
while impoverishing the soul and the earth."
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

It takes a long time for someone to die by crucifixion. The invitation for this week is to stand at the foot of the cross, to witness, and to not look away. This is hard. Be aware that some of the texts and images used for *Visio Divina* this week are graphic and disturbing. Begin each day with a grounding meditation to help you remain in your body and be present. There are suggestions for each day—including breathing, movement, imagination, and music—but use what works best for you. Notice the reactions in your body, without judgment, and take care of yourself in any way you need to remain present, perhaps stepping away to re-ground yourself, but try to keep the

focus on Jesus and those who suffer. Be sure you also leave time to re-ground yourself in the closing.

There is no explicit invitation to repeat any of this week's exercises. Listen to the promptings of Spirit and the wisdom of your body and pray this week as you feed led. Notice, again without judgement, whether you feel led to skip a particular day's exercises or to repeat any. The last two days' exercises are two different gospel accounts of Jesus' death.

Do not neglect to continue your daily Examen, as it will help keep you grounded and notice your interior movements in this challenging time.

Intention: to welcome whatever this week brings as you accompany Jesus, perhaps sorrow, anger, regret, and to be present with his suffering in its many guises.

31.1 [EF 1, 3, 8]
Grounding: Bring to mind a sacred moment in your life, where you felt closest to the Divine. Recall the memory in as much detail as you can. This may be something you recalled during the Preparation Weeks or another moment. Identify a tangible symbol or object that reminds you of the story of that moment. Hold or look at that object or symbol as you take several slow centering breaths, opening your awareness of the sacred Presence with you. Place that object or symbol on your altar or where you can see it as you go through the exercises of this week.
Read: Mark 15:25-32
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story as a witness.
Closing: Use the same grounding you used to open this day.

31.2 [EF 1, 3, 6, 9, 12]
Grounding: Listen to this music, letting it wrap around you and hold you. Move to the music if you feel led. "Lament" – Sufi Music
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-MYcLhTFsQ
Read: John 19:25-27
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story. Colloquy with Mary, Jesus' mother, and/or the other women at the foot of the cross.
Closing: 5 minutes of silent meditation, sitting so your feet are flat on the ground

31.3 [EF 1, 3, 6, 9]
Grounding: Breath prayer by Cole Arthur Riley: (INHALE) I am free to feel (EXHALE) I possess my own soul.
Practice: View the following three images of a crucified female (sometimes called a "Christa"). Choose one to meditate on more fully in the mode of *visio divina*.
"Christa" – Mayumi Oda
(click on image to enlarge)
https://mayumioda.net/products/christa
"Crucified Woman" - Almuth Lutkenhaus-Lackey
https://canadianmennonite.org/blogs/susie-guenther-loewen/missing-crucified-woman

"Woman Crucified" – Frantisek Drtikol
(click on image to view image alone)
https://onlineonly.christies.com/s/avant-garde-photographs-shalom-shpilman-collection/frantisek-drtikol-1883-1961-32/46030
Closing: Use the same grounding you used to open this day.

31:4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 9]
Grounding: Contemplative walk in nature or 5 minutes contemplation of nature in your yard or through the window
Read: John 19:28
Practice: *Visio Divina* with image of bp spill oil-bird (handout)
Closing: Breath prayer by Cole Arthur Riley: (INHALE) I won't abandon this feeling (EXHALE) I listen for wisdom.

31.5 [EF 1, 3, 9]
Grounding: Breath prayer by Cole Arthur Riley: (INHALE) I don't have to hold every pain at once (EXHALE) I can feel and not be consumed.
Practice: Click on link, then on the image to the right. That will take you to the first of a series of 3 increasingly graphic images of men being lynched. View all three and chose one to meditate on in the mode of *visio divina*.
https://www.britannica.com/topic/lynching
Closing: Use the same grounding you used to open the day or the grounding of your choice.

31.6 [EF 1, 3, 9, 12]
Grounding: 5 minutes of silent meditation focusing on your breath or the grounding of your choice.
Read: Mark 15:33-41
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story as a witness.
Closing: "The Seal Lullaby" – allow yourself to move to the music.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2on4IS8fIcc

31.7
Grounding: "Instrumental Lament" – Jordi Savali
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YvJ7gRhHpo
Read: Luke 23:44-49
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story as a witness.
Closing: Contemplative walk in nature, 5 minutes of silent mediation focusing on your breath or the grounding of your choice.

Selected Sources

James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 2011.
Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, 2002.
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*: *Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, 2013.
Cindy S. Lee, *Our Unforming: De-Westernizing Spiritual Formation*, 2022.

Christine Valters Painter, “Thank You Mama” Podcast, Episode 155.
Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh,* 2022.

Figure 6. *Brown Pelican in Oil Spill, June 3, 2010* by Charlie Riedel/Associated Press

Third Week
Week 32 – Tomb

"*Pick up a handful of dirt anywhere and you are holding the dead—*
trees that have died and rotted,
ancient shellfish that have calcified and broken apart,
bits and pieces of insects, the remains of weeds,
microscopic organisms that have come and gone within a single day, a single hour."
- Perdita Finn

"*This human life is a journey, and we all return, at some point, to earth."*
- Heidi Barr

"*You are dust and to dust you shall return*."
- Genesis 3:19

"*Until we can grieve for our planet we cannot love it—*
grieving is a sign of spiritual health."
– Robin Wall Kimmerer (citing Joanna Macy)

"*Grief disrupts the continuity of meaning in our lives.*
Large griefs, small griefs—they all count."
- Lisa Colón-DeLay

"*So Rabbi Yehoshua taught them, and us, a lesson about loss and life:*
'My children,' he said, 'hear me out. You must mourn.
The devastation deserves our attention and commemoration.
But to mourn too much, to live in perpetual deprivation, is simply wrong.
Instead, the challenge is to find a way to grieve and live.'"
- Sharon Brous

Jesus' suffering on the cross is over, so we turn our focus to what arises in us. How do we handle our grief, our fears, our anger, our own experience in the face of suffering? What resources and support have helped us in the past? What are available for you to call on now that can help you tend to your own need for healing? How is the Divine present to us in times of our own suffering?

Holy Saturday is the day in the Christian liturgical calendar between Jesus' death on Good Friday and the discovery of his resurrection on Easter Sunday. It is a day between, the gap or crack between worlds, liminal space, a threshold between what was and what will be as our hearts rest in the tomb where Jesus' body lies. We have spent months drawing close to Jesus, and now he is gone.

Most of this week is given to contemplation, noticing whatever is rising within us. This week marks the close of the Third Week phase of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Intention: to welcome whatever this week brings as you grieve with all those who mourn.

32.1 [EF 1, 9, 12]
Read: Luke 23:50-56
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy with one of the women present or sacred Other.
Closing: "After Great Pain" – Emily Dickenson
https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47651/after-great-pain-a-formal-feeling-comes-372

32.2 [EF 1, 2, 7, 8, 9]
Listen: "Solitude" – Lavinia Meijer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YB8ZH3_VLU
Practice: What is breaking your heart right now? Is there an object that comes to mind that symbolizes that? Hold it in your hand and contemplate it. When you are ready, put in on your altar.
Closing: "Just as Holy" – Chelan Harkin (handout)

32.3
Prayerfully review your journal for the Third Week. What stands out for you? What do you notice? Where did you feel that you were moving towards God/Spirit? Where did you feel you were moving away?

32.4 [EF 7, 8]
Read: "Holy Saturday" (handout)
Practice: Chose from one of the options in the "Holy Saturday" handout.

32.5
Repeat Holy Saturday.

32.6
Repeat Holy Saturday.

32.7
Savor the graces of this week.

Selected Sources
Heidi Barr, *Collisions of Earth and Sky*, 2023.
Sharon Brous, *The Amen Effect: Ancient Wisdom to Mend Our Broken Hearts and World*, 2024.
Lisa Colón-DeLay, *The Wild Land Within*, 2021.
Perdita Finn, *Take Back the Magic*, 2023.
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweatgrass*: *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013.

“JUST AS HOLY” – Chelan Harkin

The stars are pieces
of God's broken heart.

Because she didn't scurry
to clean them up quickly—
make the universe all tidy for its company—
and just let herself be
a shimmering, perfect mess
the poetry of worlds
was allowed to bloom.
Do the same with your heart,
dear one.

Your process is just
as holy.

Chelan Harkin, *Susceptible to Light: Poetry by Chelan Harkin* (London: Soulfruit Publishing, 2020), Kindle Edition.

HOLY SATURDAY

In this time between, you are invited to engage in practices that comfort you and provide space to notice and linger with whatever is rising in you. Below are some suggestions; choose one or a combination of these or any other practices that feel right for you in this time.

- Silent meditation
- Contemplative walk in nature
- Walk a labyrinth
- Reflect on one or more of the epigraph quotes for Week 32
- Repeat exercises 32.1, 32.2 or 32.3
- Listen and/or dance to soft or slow music, such as “Solitude” by Lavinia Meijer
- Take a long, hot bath

Close your time of prayer and reflection with the breath prayer of your choice.

Fourth Week
Week 33 – Dawn

"*Salvation is a baby long awaited*
or a love letter that brings us back to life.
Salvation is beauty,
a garden on earth where God walks."
- Ivone Gebara

"*The church's selective memory about the resurrection*
raises problems for women during the Fourth Week.
the tradition has too often forgotten the key role women
played as witnesses to the resurrection."
- Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

"*Joy doesn't replace any emotion; it holds them all*
and keeps any one of them from swallowing us whole.
Society has failed to understand this.
When it tells us to find joy in suffering,
it is telling us to let it go, to move on, to smile through it.
But joy says, 'Hold on to your sorrow. It can rest safely here.'"
- Cole Arthur Riley

As we enter the Fourth Week, we share in the whole range of emotions felt by those who first saw Jesus risen from the dead: Wonder, disbelief, confusion, joy, fear, and perhaps all of these at the same time. In Week 33, we enter the stories of the resurrection from the perspective of the gospels of Mark, John, and Matthew. Next week, we will read stories from the Gospel of Luke. Pay attention to how each story lands in your body. Notice which speaks to you most deeply today.

The last chapter of Mark's gospel has 20 verses. However, notes in modern translations reflect that the earliest manuscripts of this gospel, and some other ancient witnesses, do not include verses 16:9 through 16:20. Most scholars believe that those verses were later additions, and the original gospel ended at verse 16:8. For that reason, those later verses are not included here. Also, scholar Marie Noonan Sabin argues that the word in Mark 16:8 typically translated as "afraid" should more appropriately be translated as "awe" or "holy ecstasy," which is how it is translated elsewhere in Mark when that word describes the reaction of men. Being speechless is a natural reaction to being awestruck.

Be sure to continue your daily Examen. What do you notice about your interior movements as you move from the Third into the Fourth Week?

Intention: To recognize and rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus and in new life, wherever it may be found.

33.1
Read: The Fourth Week (handout)
Practice: Change out your altar to reflect your intention for the Fourth Week or phase of the *Exercises*. Include objects or images that bring you joy, or that symbolize what brings you joy.
Closing: Contemplate your altar as a focus for 5 minutes of silent meditation.

33.2 [EF 1, 3, 6, 12]
Read: Contemplation on Mary (handout)
Practice: As described in the handout
Closing: Colloquy with Jesus and/or Mary

33.3 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 12]
Read: Mark 16:1-8
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: "The Women Prepare the Spices-the Myrrhbearing Women" – Katheryn Wehy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGNlJy9MkDA&t=114s

33.4 [1, 2, 3, 6, 12]
Read: John 20:1-18
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: "The Magdalene's Blessing" – Jan Richardson
https://sanctuaryofwomen.com/blog/the-magdalenes-blessing/

33.5 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 12]
Read: Matthew 28:1-10
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: "This Joy" – Resistance Revival Chorus
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TbDPwA09Bc

33.6
Repeat any day this week. Remember that for Ignatius repetition means continuing the work you did and going deeper, not simply doing the exercise over again.

33.7
Savor the graces of the week
- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources

Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 2002.
Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed* 2nd ed., 2022.
Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh*, 2022.

Marie Noonan Sabin, *Reopening the Word: Reading Mark as Theology in the Context of Early Judaism*, 2002.

THE FOURTH WEEK

"*Perhaps resurrection means a continual dying and rising to new life in the here and now? . . . "Is resurrection a 'fact' or is it the Christian insight that life does not end with death, that in some form nothing is lost?"*
- Heather Eaton

"*Friendship is not just for friends. Friendship is for the good of the world*."
- Diana Butler Bass

"*In practice we must always begin again every day the search for salvation just as every day we have to begin again the actions of eating and drinking. It is a dynamic movement in the innermost part of our lives*."
- Ivone Gebara

And now we embark on the final phase of Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. So much has happened since we began this adventure 32 weeks ago. Sometimes, having come so far, there is a tendency to rush through these last six weeks. Resist that temptation; these are important weeks.

In the Fourth Week, we see the empty tomb and witness some of the appearances of the resurrected Jesus. We lost our friend and teacher, but now we feel hope and life stirring in our hearts as we experience his living presence with us again.

With Jesus we have touched death and now have come alive again. Even the smallest elements of life have greater color, vibrancy, and meaning.

In the final weeks, we reflect on what all of this means for us. We review the whole arc of the *Exercises.* How has this experience changed us? How are we being called to show up in the world today? Having experienced Love through the *Exercises*, how can we embody it in our lives?

Ignatius had some concrete suggestions for us as we engage the Fourth Week exercises. He encourages us to reflect on and engage in that which brings us pleasure, happiness, and joy; whatever helps us to rejoice in the new life offered by Jesus (SE 229). We might let ourselves bask in the warmth of the sun, smell the sweet fragrance of new flowers, savor the taste of delicious food, enjoy the laughter of a young child, hug someone dear to us. Whatever brings you joy, do it—and feed that joy into your contemplations.

The Fourth Week is a time to recognize the music of Christ's song being sung throughout the world and to sing and dance along. If you hear the strains of the Enemy's song, you might imagine it being encompassed by Christ's song, the way jazz music can weave discordant notes into the melody. The Fourth Week is about exploring restoration and healing for ourselves and all creation. What might that look like? How can we be a part of it?

Selected Sources

Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus: Rediscovering Jesus as Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way, and Presence,* 2021.
Heather Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, *1st ed.,* 2005.
Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 2002.

CONTEMPLATION ON MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS

"*We cannot say that the only truth about the life of Mary*
is the little bit that the New Testament texts tell us.
The fact that something is not written
does not mean that it did not happen."
- Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer

This is an original contemplation created by Ignatius, which he designates as the first exercise of the Fourth Week. For Ignatius, it seemed only natural that the first person the resurrected Jesus would appear to would be his mother, even though such a scene was not recorded in the Gospels.

1. Begin with a few centering breaths.
2. Imagine Mary, mother of Jesus, in the dark early hours of Easter morning, long before sunrise. Where is she? Imagine the details of the room. How does it look, smell, feel?
3. What is Mary doing at that time? Remember it is now before dawn on the third day since her son's death. What is she thinking? Feeling?
4. In your imagination, join Mary in some way. Witness as her son, Jesus, appears to her. How does he look? Sound? How do they greet each other? What do they say to each other?
5. Engage with this in any way that feels right for you.
6. Close with a colloquy with Mary and/or Jesus.

Selected Sources
Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer, *Mary: Mother God, Mother of the Poor*, 1989.

Fourth Week
Week 34 – Resurrection

"*Even if you are not ready for day*
It cannot always be night."
- Gwendolyn Brooks

"*Love doesn't just sit there, like a stone;*
it has to be made, like bread, remade all the time, made new."
- Ursula K. LeGuin

"*On Easter, Jesus goes from the tomb back to the table . . .*
They never return to the cross.
Jesus never takes them back to the site of the execution . . .
Instead, almost all the post-resurrection appearances . . .
Take place at the upper room table or other tables and meals . . .
What if the table is the point?"
- Diana Butler Bass

"*Caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar.*
(Voyager, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks.)"
— Gloria Anzaldúa

In this week we continue exploring stories of Jesus' resurrection, beginning with Luke's account of the empty tomb.

Intention: To recognize and rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus and in new life, wherever it may be found.

34.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 12]
Read: Luke 24:1-12
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy with a witness.
Closing: "Dawn of Faith" Thomas-Adam Habuda and the London Philharmonic
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFcRl5peQpw

34.2 [EF 1, 2, 3, 12]
Read: Luke 24:13-35
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy. You are invited to eat some kind of bread as you read this story.
Closing: "Crowded Table" The Highwomen
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPfI8zBWub4

34.3 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 12]
Read: "The Servant-Girl at Emmaus" by Denise Levertov and image by Diego Valázquez
https://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/e-Emmaus.html
Practice: *Lectio* and *visio divina*.
Closing: "Emmaus Blessing" Jan Richardson. You are invited to treat the paired lines of the poem as a breath prayer, saying the first on the inhale, and the second on the exhale.
https://paintedprayerbook.com/2011/05/05/easter-3-known/

34.4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 12]
Read: John 20:19-29
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: "Evidence" by Thelonius Monk
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3kvx8yGzfM

34.5 [EF 1, 2, 3, 12]
Read: John 20:30-31 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-5
Practice: Using spiritual imagination, with writing or art journaling, describe a resurrection appearance of Jesus that did not make it into the gospel accounts.
Closing: Breath prayer by Cole Arthur Riley: (INHALE) My imagination expands (EXHALE) I expand with it

34.6
Repeat any day this week.

34.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources

Diana Butler Bass, *The Cottage*, blog, "The Holy Thursday Revolution: Pull Up A Chair," March 26, 2024 https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/the-holy-thursday-revolution-pull?r=1vfcm&fbclid=IwAR3lo29-nyRSz_PTo0SesCcpGVlXFDOCVUiLmyRbc7CDeqlg356lmWS1Tdo_aem_AZp2ig9El_vzU2XVBpqIpThc1qySgYBRxCXwQXFYttn5WRZ9OxWJ0Q7zGQNpO0TYQinKBn1uK1-dESS-S3DtwQLu&triedRedirect=true
Ursula K. LeGuin, *The Lathe of Heaven*, 1971.

Fourth Week
Week 35 – Sending

"*Friendship is not just for friends.*
Friendship is for the good of the world."
- Diana Butler Bass

"*Restoration of right relationship with God*
includes restoration of right relationship with one another
and with the earth."
- Karen Baker-Fletcher

"*The marvel of a basket is in its transformation,*
its journey from wholeness as a living plant
to fragmented strands and back to wholeness again as a basket.
A basket knows the dual powers of destruction
and creation that shape the world.
Strands once separated are rewoven into a new whole.
The journey of a basket is also the journey of a people."
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

This is the last week of scriptural contemplations in these Exercises. We experience with the disciples several other encounters with their resurrected friend and teacher, who sends them out to share the good news with the world. In these stories, relationships broken or fragmented since the arrest and death of Jesus are rewoven and given new life and meaning.

Intention: To recognize and rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus and in new life, wherever it may be found.

35.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 12]
Read: John 21:1-14
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: "Cast Net Catch" Short video
https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Q_Xg-f6r5YQ

35.2 [EF 1, 2, 3, 10, 12]
Read: John 21:15-17
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: Breath prayer: (INHALE) Do you love me? (EXHALE) Feed my sheep.

35.3
Repeat one of the first 2 days of this week.

35.4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 10, 12]
Read: Luke 24:36-53
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: "Clara Schumann's Scherzo No. 2 in C Minor" Isata Kanneh-Mason
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7f9SoDuHjY

35.5 [EF 1, 2, 3, 10, 12]
Read: Acts 2:1-17
Practice: *Lectio divina* then use Ignatian Contemplation to enter the story and colloquy.
Closing: "This Grace That Scorches Us" Jan Richardson
https://paintedprayerbook.com/2014/06/01/pentecost-this-grace-that-scorches-us/

34.6
Repeat any day this week.

34.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources

Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit,* 1998.
Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus: Rediscovering Jesus as Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way, and Presence*, 2021.
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013.

Fourth Week
Week 36 – Contemplatio

"*Love ought to be put more in deeds than in words*."
- Ignatius of Loyola

"I choose joy over despair.
Not because I have my head in the sand,
but because joy is what the earth gives me daily
and I must return the gift."
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

"*The exercise of imagination is dangerous*
to those who profit from the way things are
because it has the power to show that the way things
are is not permanent, not universal, not necessary."
- Ursula K. Le Guin

The Contemplation on Divine Love, often referred to as "the Contemplatio" for its Latin title: *Contemplatio ad Amorem*, is a lengthy prayer in several parts designed by Ignatius as the final contemplation in his *Exercises*. We will work through these stages over the course of the next two weeks. Ignatius conceived of this as the culmination of all that has gone before in the *Exercises*.

An important thing to note here is that this is a "contemplation" not a "meditation." As such, Ignatius intended the retreatant to engage their imagination when doing these exercises. These are creative and heart-felt practices. For this reason, it is also important to continue your daily Examen practice, as it may provide important information as you move through the Contemplatio.

Intention: to be aware of all the gifts which the Divine lovingly shares with me, and all the spiritual support available to me, which empowers me to respond just as lovingly to the world.

36.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10]
Read and Practice: Contemplation on Divine Love 1-4 (handout) Part 1
Closing: "We Are" Sweet Honey in the Rock
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWaw-tQ4W7w

36.2 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10]
Read and Practice: Contemplation on Divine Love 1-4 (handout) Part 2
Closing: repeat "We Are" Sweet Honey in the Rock (you may want to dance to it, or create a dance like the woman did in this video, or learn hers)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=po6Lxqu_GSQ

36.3 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 11]
Read and Practice: Contemplation on Divine Love 1-4 (handout) Part 3
Closing: “Gratitude”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4115qFsdWKQ

36.4 [EF 6, 10]
Read and Practice: Contemplation on Divine Love 1-4 (handout) Part 4
Closing: “Take and Receive” prayer (handout) or musical setting of it, “These Alone Are Enough” by Dan Schutte. This prayer was written by Ignatius for the Fourth Week as part of the Contemplation on Divine Love.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mxg-qBhZ7M8

36.5 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 11]
Read and Practice: Contemplation on Divine Love (handout) Part 5
Closing: “Take and Receive” prayer as written or the musical setting.

34.6
Repeat any day this week.

34.7
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

Selected Sources
Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit,* 1998.
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013.

CONTEMPLATION ON DIVINE LOVE

PART 1 – SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

"*The wisdom of the body is that if we honor what supports us we feel supported—*
if we bring any creativity or imagination to that we feel it even more."
- Cynthia Winton-Henry

"*Leaf by leaf, root by root, the trees, the berries, the grasses are joining forces, and so there are birds and deer and bugs that have come to join them. And so the world is made.*"
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

"*I pray to the dead to help me remember who I am*
*while I'm still aliv*e."
- Perdita Finn

Ignatius begins the Contemplatio by inviting the retreatant to imagine they "are standing before God, and of all the angels and of the saints interceding for me" (SE 232). In other words, we are to begin this final contemplation by imagining our full range of spiritual support present and praying for us; we face these exercises with this support at our metaphorical back.

In the Second Week, we explored our ancestral story, writing our own imaginative genealogies. In this contemplation, however, we are asked to cast a broader net: to imagine not just our ancestors, but any being, place, or object that provides us with spiritual support. These are what Cynthia Winton-Henry calls our "spirit team." She writes: "Body and soul thrive with the support of community, teachers, and ancestors, both seen and unseen. By regularly invoking and thanking them, we nourish these relationships and invite their support."

Further, by doing this, we more deeply understand ourselves as connected to others across time and space. We are not alone; we live in a web of relationship that hold us and give us more strength than we knew we had. In the words of Sweet Honey in the Rock:

We are mothers of courage
Fathers of time
We are daughters of dust
And sons of great vision
We are sisters of mercy
Brothers of love
We're lovers of life and the builders of nations . . .

Practice

1. Start with a few deep, centering breaths.
2. Reread the "Ancestors" handout and your journal for 19.3 from Week 19 of these *Exercises*.

3. Reread “Minyan of Trees” handout and your journal for 29.3 from Week 29 of these *Exercises*.
4. Using whole pages in your journal, or on a separate sheet or sheets of paper, start writing down your “spirit team.” Start with the names in your genealogy from Week 19, and your natural *minyan* from Week 29. Add anyone, any place, anything, any practice, that you feel has supported you. They can be currently enfleshed or passed beyond the veil. Use your imagination and creativity. If you feel a healthy connection with someone, some place, something then they are on your spirit team. For example, my own spirit team includes several specific trees, animals, a mountain, friends, family, Jesus, Mary, Ignatius, teachers throughout my life, students I have taught, the ocean, characters from movies and books, authors, warm baths, and brownies. (If you regularly practice SoulCollage™ the cards in your Community, Council, and Companions suits would all be on your spirit team.) Fill the whole page or pages and leave some extra pages or space so you can add more later as they occur to you.
5. Read over those names, and doodle around any that shimmer for you.

Selected Sources

Cynthia Winton-Henry, *The Art of Ensoulment*, 2023.

PART 2 – SPIRITUAL SUPPORT (CON'T)

"*The good news is that we never have to be alone again if we use imagination*."
- Cynthia Winton-Henry

"*We begin by acknowledging the presence of the dead*
and making space for them in our hearts. . .
Our relationships with the dead are, well, relationships."
- Perdita Finn

Like any relationships, we need to nurture our relationships with those on our spirit team. We do that through attention and gratitude. We can also ask for specific support from them or give them an assignment, which opens the way for them to collaborate with us. There are many creative ways to do this, using the list you made in Part 1. Spend your prayer time today doing just that. Here are some suggestions but do whatever feels right to you. Some may take longer than others and may be returned to at a later date. Some involve your whole spirit team list. You can also chose some to work with today but with the idea that you will acknowledge and thank others on other days. You may wish to make a regular practice of thanking some or all of your spirit team each day, and in doing so you will be reminded of all the spiritual support you have.

Examples

- Sing the names of your spirit team as a simple chant.
- Divide the list into 4 relatively equal parts and say the names in each part while facing the four directions. Bow to each direction after saying the names.
- Create a collage representing the names on your spirit team list and place it on your altar. Use it for *visio divina*.
- Make SoulCollage™ cards for the names on your spirit team list, one per card. Start with the ones that have more energy around them for you this day.
- Make playing card collages for each name on your list. This is a good use for old decks of playing cards that are missing some cards or buy a cheap deck and collage on one or both sides. Make one card for each name on your list, starting with the ones that have energy around them for you this day. You may want to laminate them later so you can carry them around in your pocket without damaging them.
- Write or paint the names on your spirit team list on smooth rocks (you can buy bags or such stones at craft stores). Put them in a bowl and each day pull out one or two to carry with you.
- Scan the list, noticing which names jump out at you and make them into a breath prayer of gratitude.
- Put the list up on your refrigerator, or by your computer, so you can see it every day.

Selected Sources

Cynthia Winton-Henry, *The Art of Ensoulment,* 2023.

PART 3 – GIFTS

"*How, in our modern world,*
can we find our way to understand the earth as a gift again,
to make our relations with the world sacred again?
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

In the spiral way of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the next stage of the Contemplatio returns us to gratitude for all the gifts we have been given in love, particularly the gifts of all creation. This contemplation will list several areas of gifts to contemplate. You can contemplate one for the entire prayer period or go through them all. The intent is to use your imagination for these contemplations, but if images help you, you may want to look up images as an aid to your imagination. As you contemplate, let a spirit of gratitude well up in you for all these gifts.

Practice

1. Start with a few deep, centering breaths.
2. In your imagination, consider all the splendors of the created world. Start with the slice of creation on which you live. What natural gifts are you aware of near your home? In your area?
3. Broaden out your focus to consider with wonder the natural gifts of planet Earth, from the largest of mountains, the smallest of microbes, and those in between.
4. Bring to mind those gifts Spirit has co-created with humankind through the ages, including the arts and sciences.
5. Consider the wonders of the created universe, as revealed to us through the sciences of astronomy and physics.

PART 4 – GIFTS (con't)

"*Take, Lord, and receive*
All my liberty, my memory, my understanding
And my entire will—
All that I have and call my own.
You have given it all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours;
Do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace.
That is enough for me."
- "Take and Receive" prayer, Ignatius of Loyola (SE 234)

"*The shared capacity to sing points to the many deep genetic connections*
that link humans to other living beings.
In a beautiful article Rhodora Beaton eloquently states,
'The image of singing as we go invites a broader vision of the journey song,
one that includes the duets of gibbons,
the beat-keeping dances of parrots,
and the elaborate and distinctive calls of whales and other aquatic mammals.'
Humans do not sing alone
but raise their voices with a world of singers sharing the journey of life together."
- Elizabeth A. Johnson

"*Nature is always calling us into greater gestures of bravery. And as we accept those invitations*
to our personal edge, we lose the ability to shrink into falseness."
- Toko-pa Turner

"*In many shamanic societies, if you came to a shaman or medicine person,*
complaining of being disheartened, dispirited, or depressed,
they would ask one of four questions.
When did you stop dancing? When did you stop singing?
When did you stop being enchanted by stories?
When did you stop finding comfort in the sweet territory of silence?"
- Angeles Arrien

This part continues consideration of the sacred gifts given to us personally. Gifts are things that come to us pretty naturally. This includes our creative birthrights, such as movement, use of the voice, mark making, and story. These are "birthrights" because humans come to them almost instinctively. Think of the cries of a small baby using her voice as she kicks and waves her arms. Once mobile, the smallest of children can make marks in the dirt, smear around finger paint (or food on the tray of a high chair), and enjoy being told or read stories. With practice, movement grows into athletics or dance, voice evolves into oratory or song, mark making is visual art, storytelling enables meaning making in our lives. But whether we practice and hone any of these arts or not, the expression of them is our right.

Unfortunately, sometimes these birthrights become stifled, as we internalize judgments about the quality of our expression of them. After being told too often that we can't sing, we stop singing. We become embarrassed to dance in front of others, or don't even try to draw because we can't do it "good enough." Maybe we don't even believe we are creative, or that what we do isn't "art." It is important for our own healing, and for our ability to help in the healing of the world, that we recognize our creative gifts and claim them.

Practice

1. Start with a few deep, centering breaths.
2. Using whole pages in your journal, or on a separate sheet or sheets of paper, start writing down what you consider to be your own gifts or talents. List as many as come to you, no matter how "small" or seemingly insignificant.
3. Include anything that comes easily to you.
4. Include anything anyone has ever said you were good at, even if you don't agree.
5. Do you practice any other "arts," even those that do not look like "art," such as gardening, cooking, playing? If so, be sure they are on your list.
6. Read over your list, and doodle around any that shimmer for you.
7. Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, or sacred Other about this experience.

Selected Sources

Angeles Arrien, *Four-Fold Way*, 1993.
Cynthia Winton-Henry, *The Art of Ensoulment*, 2023.

PART 5 – MUTUALITY

"*The moral covenant of reciprocity*
calls us to honor our responsibilities for all we have been given,
for all that we have taken.
It's our turn now, long overdue.
Let us hold a giveaway for Mother Earth,
spread our blankets out for her and pile them high with gifts of our own making.
Imagine the books, the paintings, the poems, the clever machines,
the compassionate acts, the transcendent ideas, the perfect tools.
The fierce defense of all that has been given.
Gifts of mind, hands, heart, voice, and vision all offered up on behalf of the earth.
Whatever our gift, we are called to give it and to dance for the renewal of the world."
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

Claiming and using our gifts is important both for our own healing and for the healing of the world. Your gifts are Spirit-given because the world needs them, and you. We give back as we have been given. Mutuality. Reciprocity. It's the natural order of the world. We breath out carbon dioxide, plants breathe it in and give back oxygen that we breathe in. Cycles of giving and receiving.

Practice

1. Begin with a few deep, centering breaths.
2. Consider whether any of your talents or creative birthright gifts have been stifled or silenced over time. For example, has anyone told you that you were not good at something like singing, dancing, writing, or drawing? Has someone said, "don't quit your day job" about something?
3. If so, you might want to try it out again—in the safety of your own home. Dance, sing, draw, however Spirit moves. Then try to reflect on that experience without judgment. Did you enjoy it? If you notice any judgment, be curious about where that judgment comes from.
4. If nothing comes to mind as a gift that is stifled, reflect on whether there is any practice or activity that triggers you in some way, where even the thought of doing it brings up emotions such as anxiety or hatred. Something you don't like to do. Maybe you hate writing, or running, or playing cards? How does it feel in your body when you think of that? Breathe into that feeling and get curious about why you dislike it or why the thought of doing that activates you.
5. Say out loud "My name is _____, I am _____" and speak the gifts and talents you are claiming to the Universe. For example, "My name is Chris Ng, I am a teacher, a baker, a cat tender, a weaver, an organizer, a spiritual director, a preacher, a singer, a writer …." Note: this is not about roles, it's about gifts, so list things because they are things that come fairly naturally for you and that others have affirmed.
6. Choose one and do it as an offering to the Divine. For example, sing a song, write a poem, bake a cake, organize a closet.
7. Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, or sacred Other about this experience.

Selected Sources

Angeles Arrien, *Four-Fold Way*, 1993.
Perdita Finn, *Take Back the Magic*, 2023.
Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Creation and the Cross*, 2018.
Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013.
Toko-pa Turner, *Belonging: Remembering Ourselves Home*, 2017.
Cynthia Winton-Henry, *The Art of Ensoulment,* 2023.

Fourth Week
Week 37– God in All Things

"*Salvation will not be something outside the fabric of life*
but will take place within the heart of it."
- Ivone Gebara

"*We become like God.*
Made in the image of God,
we become fully who we are, fully human,
by participating in God's own life and love."
- Sallie McFague

"*In pursuit of liberation, we do not need to pine after the power of the oppressor;*
we have to long for our own power to be fully realized."
- Cole Arthur Riley

"*What we need to share is something of the dance of the Spirit within us."*
- Karen Baker-Fletcher

Intention: to be aware of God in all things, including myself, working for the healing of the world.

37.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 11]
Read and Practice: Contemplation on Divine Love 6-9 (handout) Part 6 – God in All Things
Closing: *Visio Divina* with the images of Mickael Owunna (choose one in the article to focus on or reflect on them as a group)
https://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2019/03/03/696969592/transforming-the-pain-of-black-lives-lost-into-portraits-of-magic-embodied

37.2 [EF 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11]
Read and Practice: Contemplation on Divine Love 6-9 (handout) Part 7 – God Laboring in All Things
Closing: Breath prayer of your choice.

37.3 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6]
Read and Practice: Contemplation on Divine Love 6-9 (handout) Part 8 – Dancing with the Divine
Closing: Chose any music that makes you feel like dancing – and dance!

37.4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11]
Read and Practice: Contemplation on Divine Love 6-9 (handout) Part 9 – Indwelling
Closing: 5 minutes of silent meditation

37.5
Repeat any day this week

37.6
Savor the graces of the week

- Prayerfully review your journal. Return to any words, scripture passages or other readings, videos, images, or memories that have more energy for you.

Close with the closing that spoke most to you this week

37.7
Prayerfully review your journal for the Fourth Week. What stands out for you? What do you notice? Where did you feel that you were moving towards God/Spirit? Where did you feel you were moving away?

Selected Sources

Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit*, 1998.
Heather Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*, *1st ed.,* 2005.
Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 2002.
Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology*, 2021.
Molly Remer, "Margins for Magic," *Feminism and Religion* (April 10, 2024)
https://feminismandreligion.com/2024/04/10/margins-for-magic-by-molly-remer/
Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh*, 2022.

CONTEMPLATION ON DIVINE LOVE 6-9

PART 6 – GOD IN ALL THINGS

"*Imagination, we might say, is where reality is met*
in a way that is open to its mystery,
and which seeks to encounter and explore
the mysterious with experience:
to find God in all things, in Ignatian terms."
- Emily Abdeni-Hobman

Ignatius invites us "to look how God dwells in creatures, in the elements, giving them being, in the plants vegetating, in the animals feeling in them, in [humans] giving them to understand: and so in me, giving me being, animating me, giving me sensation and making me to understand; likewise making a temple of me, being created to the likeness and image of" the Divine (SE 235).

As your journey through this retreat draws to a close, you are invited to reflect, without judgment, on your experience and awareness of God in all things.

How aware are you of divine presence in all things?
What helps you to sense that?
Has that changed for you in the course of this retreat?
Where do you struggle?
Where might there be an invitation for you?
Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, or sacred Other about your reflections.

If you find some judgment arising within you, just get curious about it, asking yourself and/or conversation partners in a colloquy what story might be underlying that?

PART 7 – GOD LABORING IN ALL THINGS

"*We know that the whole creation has been groaning*
As in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."
- Romans 8:22

"Even a wounded world is feeding us.
Even a wounded world holds us, giving us moments of wonder and joy."
- Robin Wall Kimmerer

In this part, Ignatius invites us "to consider how God works and labors for me in all things created on the face of the earth—that is, behaves like one who labors—as in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle, etc., giving them being, preserving them, giving them vegetation and sensation, etc. Then to reflect on myself" (SE 236). God as one who labors in and through all creation.

In medical terms, "labor" is a series of continuous, progressive contractions of the uterus that help the cervix open and thin out to facilitate childbirth.

How do you imagine God is laboring in and through all things?
How might the pain we see in our world be labor pains?
What openings might there be for new life to emerge?

You have progressed through this retreat for at least 9 months. One could imagine the Contemplatio exercises as labor contractions, leading to the birthing of new life.

How do you experience God laboring in you and through you?
Where are you experiencing an opening that could lead to the birth of new life in you? In your world?

Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, and/or sacred Other about your reflections.

PART 8 – DANCING WITH THE DIVINE

"*Dancing in partnership with another*
requires a different kind of thinking than dancing alone.
It requires attentiveness and listening not just to the beat of the music,
but to the other."
- Xochitl Gonzalez

"*I invite you to imagine yourself so attuned to the natural world*
that you could waltz or swing dance with an ancient pile of rock and earth.
To live so fully in your creatureliness that you could communicate with the world
in a way that makes the sky weep in understanding and the plants shiver with anticipation
at what is possible when life chooses harmony over dissonance.
I invite you to think about what it would mean to identify the parts of yourself
that are akin to rivers and hilltops and soil and trees.
To truly listen to those who are different and act in ways that will make a difference.
Somehow I know that there must be a way to hold that connection close to the bone
and let it be a foundation.
Imagine with me what it would be like to accept the invitation."
- Heidi Barr

Imagine. Yes, imagine.

What comes up for you as you read the quotes above? What shimmers? What resistances make you hesitate?

What does your dance with the Divine look like? Feel like?

Holding that in your heart, rewrite the "Take and Receive" prayer from last week in a way that feels authentic to you. Recite it out loud. You might even want to record it and play it back so you can listen to yourself recite it. How did it feel to write this? How does it feel to hear it?

PART 9 – INDWELLING

"*Ite, inflammate omnia/Go, set the world on fire*."
- Ignatius of Loyola

"*What makes a fire burn*
Is space between the logs."
- Judy Brown

"*Who we are in our rest determines who we are in the world*."
- Cindy Lee

"*Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Love the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless*."
- Alice Walker

The close of the Contemplatio is not about doing, it's about being. Knowing all the spiritual support that is available to us, remembering all the gifts of love we have, aware of God's loving presence in all things and laboring in all things, including ourselves, we can rest cradled in that love.

Love pours down upon us, wrote Ignatius, just as the sun descends through its rays and water spills forth from a fountain. And from that we are renewed to be that Love in the world.

Read: "Rite of Renewal" by Molly Remer and do the rite she describes at the beginning of this article.
https://feminismandreligion.com/2024/04/10/margins-for-magic-by-molly-remer/

Selected Sources

Emily Abdeni-Holman, "Imagining the Real: Fairy Stories and Spiritual Practice," *The Way* 63:2 (April 2024), 34-46.
Heidi Barr, *Collisions of Earth and Sky,* 2023.
Judy Brown, "Fire."
Xochitl Gonzalez, "I Wanna Dance With Somebody: Learning to follow," *The Atlantic* (January 15, 2024) https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/01/dance-salsa-relationships/677132/
Cindy Lee, *Our Unforming*, 2022.
Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, 1983.

Fourth Week
Week 38– Contemplatives in Action

"*A mentor and friend once said to me,*
If there is someone who is both activist and contemplative and who does both well,
I have not yet met them.
I silently accepted the challenge."
- Cole Arthur Riley

"*The contemplative in action desires God and, like Jesus, desires what God desires*."
- Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

"*Through activism we confront toxicity in our world;*
through contemplation we confront it in ourselves."
- Philena Heurtz

This week we review where we've been during the 37 prior weeks of this retreat. As we spiral back, we are also setting the groundwork for the next phase of our own journey. There is nothing that wraps these *Exercises* up in a nice, neat bow, the work continues in our inner life and in our community. Ignatius calls for us to become "contemplatives in action," taking the insights and transformation in ourselves into the way we show up in the world.

Intention: to pay attention and savor the graces of these *Exercises* and how they have impacted me.

38.1 [EF 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8]
Review your journal for weeks 01-05. You may want to focus on week 05. What do you notice? Where did you feel that you were moving towards God/Spirit? Where did you feel you were moving away? Review the Principle and Foundation from week 05 and your own version of it; would you write it differently today? Journal your noticings about those Preparation Weeks.
Closing: Chose a closing from weeks 01-05.

38.2 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10]
Review your journal for weeks 06-11. You may want to focus on your review of the First Week in week 11. What do you notice? Where did you feel that you were moving towards God/Spirit? Where did you feel you were moving away? Journal your noticings about the First Week.
Closing: Chose a closing from weeks 06-11.

38.3 [EF 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12]
Review your journal for week 26 in which you reviewed your experience of the Second Week. What do you notice? Where did you feel that you were moving towards God/Spirit? Where did you feel you were moving away? Journal your noticings about the Second Week.
Closing: Chose a closing from weeks 12-26.

38.4 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12]
Contemplatively read your journal for weeks 27-32, the Third Week, in the mode of *lectio divina*, underlining or highlighting words or phrases that stood out or shimmered for you. Write those words or phrases on a separate plain piece of paper and chose one of the following practices:

5. Make a prayer icon from them using the *Praying in Color* technique.
6. Write a poem that incorporates as many of those words or phrases as you can. Sometimes it helps to cut out the words and rearrange them on the page until they start to form the bones of a poem.
7. Offer those words or phrases to the earth in any way that feels right to you. For example, you might write them in sand and contemplate them or walk or sit outside repeating them like a mantra.
8. Playfully or creatively engage with those words or phrases in any way that feels interesting to you.

Closing: Choose any closing from weeks 27-32.

38.5 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12]
Review your journal for weeks 27-37. What do you notice? Where did you feel that you were moving towards God/Spirit? Where did you feel you were moving away?
Closing: Chose a closing from weeks 27-37.

38.6 [EF 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12]
Contemplatively read your journal for weeks 33-37, the Fourth Week, in the mode of *lectio divina*, underlining or highlighting words or phrases that stood out or shimmered for you. Write those words or phrases on a separate plain piece of paper and chose one of the following practices:

1. Make a prayer icon from them using the *Praying in Color* technique.
2. Write a poem that incorporates as many of those words or phrases as you can. Sometimes it helps to cut out the words and rearrange them on the page until they start to form the bones of a poem.
3. Offer those words or phrases to the earth in any way that feels right to you. For example, you might write them in sand and contemplate them or walk or sit outside repeating them like a mantra.
4. Playfully or creatively engage with those words or phrases in any way that feels interesting to you.

Closing: Choose any closing from weeks 33-37.

38.7 [EF 1, 2, 3, 10, 11]
Savor the graces in your journal for this past week.
Read: The Journey Continues (handout)
Create and practice a ritual to mark your transition out of this retreat into your continuing journey.

<u>Selected Sources</u>
Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit: Womanist Wordings of God and Creation,* 1998.

Elizabeth Liebert and Annemarie Paulin-Campbell, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*, 2nd *ed.*, 2022.
Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us,* 2022.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

"*We have arrived, but we are still arriving*."
- Kaitlin Curtice

"*In practice we must always begin again every day the search for salvation just as every day we have to begin again the actions of eating and drinking. It is a dynamic movement in the innermost part of our lives."*
- Ivone Gebara

These *Spiritual Exercises* have been a retreat in daily life—woven into, not separate from, our days. And so the journey continues, as our lives continue. In the days ahead, what you carry with you from this retreat will continue to deepen and work within you.

The *Exercises* are often called a "school of prayer." Over these 38 weeks you have experienced prayer in a variety of forms, and so have more insight into what forms of prayer more easily connect you with the Source, and which you find most challenging. Both are valuable. Know that your friend Jesus, his mother Mary, and all the sacred Others (and your spirit team) will continue to be available to you, as close as your own breath, the beating of your heart, and your own imagination—all of which are sacred.

You have developed a rhythm of prayer, that can also continue. You can use these *Exercises* as your guide—returning to those that you found the most fruitful. With every repetition more will be revealed. As you found in the review exercises, your journals themselves provide material on which to pray in a variety of ways. You can go back to them again and again and mine them for insight.

Most of all, you can move from a posture of making the *Exercises* to living and embodying them: Show up in the world rooted in an understanding that you are not simply an isolated and autonomous individual, but part of an interconnected and interdependent web of relationships with all other beings and the earth on which we make our home. Resist the voices of the dominant culture that tell you otherwise. Claim your gifts and use them. Notice and honor your own wisdom and experience and that of others, particularly those whose wisdom and experience have been too often ignored. Practice discernment as a way of being in the world. Continue to use your imagination and trust what it reveals to you. Stay open to possibility. Lean into consolation, and when you are in the times of desolation that inevitably come, wrap the quilt of God's love around you. Be love, in whatever ways you can. All of this is salvation, every day.

Author Kaitlin Curtice put it well:

> *So plant the garden. Tell the story. Go to therapy and pay for someone else to go too. Text a friend and let them know you have not forgotten them. Ask someone not to forget you. Look into your dog's eyes and exchange kinship. Tell Mother Earth you love her and receive that love back. Challenge the status quo. Learn about what's happening in the world. Water your house plants. Take a walk or look out a window. Listen to music. Create. Tell the truth. Forgive yourself.*

> *Decolonize. Live your life in the overlapping spaces where it all comes together, and dream.* (190-191).

Blessing on the journey.

Selected Sources

Kaitlin B. Curtice, *Living Resistance: An Indigenous Vision for Seeking Wholeness Every Day*, 2023.

Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, 2002.

Kevin O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*: *Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life,* 2011.

Wk/EF	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1			x			x	x	x				
2	x						x	x				
3	x	x				x	x	x				
4	x						x	x				
5	x	x	x		x							
6	x		x			x			x			
7	x		x						x	x		
8	x	x					x	x	x			x
9	x	x		x		x			x	x	x	
10	x	x	x			x			x	x	x	x
11	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
12	x	x	x	x		x	x					x
13	x		x			x						
14	x	x	x	x		x				x	x	
15	x	x	x	x	x	x						x
16	x	x	x									x
17	x		x			x						x
18	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x
19	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
20	x	x				x				x		x
21	x		x		x			x	x			x
22	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x
23	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x
24	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x
25	x	x	x	x		x	x			x		x
26	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
27	x		x			x	x					x
28	x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x	x
29	x	x	x			x	x		x			x
30	x		x			x			x			x
31	x	x	x			x			x			x
32	x	x					x	x	x			x
33	x	x	x			x						x
34	x	x	x			x						x
35	x	x	x			x				x		x
36	x	x	x			x				x	x	
37	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	
38	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

APPENDIX B – BASIC ECOFEMINIST PRINCIPLES CHART

This chart represents the Basic Ecofeminist Principles explored in each week in this adaptation of the *Exercises*.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Other
2:1-12 2:13-23 3:13 11:28-30 13:54-58 25:14-30 26:36-46 26:57-58, 69-75 27:11-26 28:1-10	1:9-11 1:12-13 1:14-20 1:29-31 4:35-41 5:21-43 7:24-30 8:22-26 10:13-16 10:17-27 12:38-44 14:1-11 14:12-16 14:32-42 15:16-20 15:21-26 15:25-32 15:33-41 16:1-8	1:6-25 1:26-38 1:39-45 1:46-56 1:57-66 2:1-7 2:8-20 2:21-39 2:40 2:41-50 2:51-52 7:11-17 7:36-50 8:1-3 8:19-20 10:38-42 11:42-51 13:34-35 15:11-32 18:18-25 19:1-10 19:28-40 22:39-46 22:47-53 23:44-49 23:50-56 24:1-12 24:13-35 24:36-53	1:1, 14 1:35-39 2:1-12 4:1-30.39-42 6:1-15 8:1-11 11:1-46, 54 12:1-11 13:1-17 15:12-17 19:25-27 19:28 20:1-18 20:19-29 20:30-31 21:1-14 21:15-17	Gal 5:1 Gal 5:16-17 msg Gen 1:1-5 Gen 2:4-3:24 Gen 18:1-15 Isa 55:12 James 12:15-17 Job 12:7-10 Ps 139:7-14 Rom 7:15 Rom 8:38-39 Phil. 4:10-14 Gen 2:4-3:24 Gal 5:16-17 James 12:15-17 1 Cor. 15:3-5 1 John 4:19 1 John 4:7-8, 16 Acts 2:1-17

APPENDIX C – SCRIPTURE CHART

APPENDIX D

CLOSING QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for participating in this project! The heart with which you entered into these *Spiritual Exercises* over the course of our 9+ months together touched me deeply. These questions will help me to reflect on and evaluate these adapted *Exercises.* This work is not over; your feedback will help me to continue to evolve these *Exercises* and accompanying materials into a form that can be shared with directors who want to offer this version of the retreat to others. Your journal, and particularly the last week of review exercises, may help you in answering these questions.

The first set of questions ask you about your experience as a retreatant, making the *Spiritual Exercises*:

1. Describe how you approached these daily exercises. For example, were you able to make them a daily habit? What time of day worked for you? Did you do the daily exercises in order or did you pick and choose? Did any of this change over the course of the retreat?

2. What was your general experience of the retreat over the course of the 38 weeks. How did the rhythm of prayer feel to you? What changes did you notice in how you were engaging this material?

3. What surprised you about your experience of the retreat? What challenged you? In what ways did you experience the Spirit during the course of the retreat?

4. What was your favorite aspect of the retreat? What was your favorite part of the exercises themselves as presented? Least favorite? What was most helpful? Least helpful?

5. Where are you and God right now? How would you describe your relationship to God today? What images or metaphors for the Divine feel particularly powerful for you now?

6. What are the strongest beliefs you hold? Did those deepen or change over the cousr of the retreat?

7. How would you describe Jesus today? How would you describe your relationship to Jesus today?

8. How would you describe Mary, the mother of Jesus, today? How would you describe your relationship her?

9. Did your understanding of or relationship to the natural world change over the course of the retreat? Please explain. What will you carry with you from the experience of making this retreat? Is that what you expected or hoped for?

The next set of questions ask you to consider this retreat from the perspective of a spiritual director:

10. Ignatius sent people out to offer the *Exercises* to others after making the retreat with him once. Having completed this retreat, would you feel comfortable offering it to others (in whole or in part) with the material as presented? Why or why not?

11. From the perspective of a spiritual director, what material did you find most helpful?

12. What resources would help you feel more comfortable offering this retreat to your own directees?

APPENDIX E

Claremont School of Theology
IRB Research Protocol Format

1. **Date of submission**: October 28, 2022

2. **Project Title**: God in All Things: An Eco-Feminist Approach to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises

3. **Name of Researcher**
    a. Principal Investigator: Rev. Christine M Ng
    b. Department or Program: D.Min. in Spiritual Renewal, Contemplative Practice and Strategic Leadership
    c. Advisor (with email address): Dr. Frank Rogers, frogers@cst.edu

4. **Project Period (beginning and ending):** 2023-2024.

5. **Proposed funding sources, if applicable. Identify any potential conflicts of interest.** N/A

6. **Summary of the research objective(s) (Explain what you hope to learn, demonstrate or achieve in 1 paragraph):** The goal of my project is to adapt the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises using an eco-feminist lens in a way accessible to progressive Protestants. My research will gauge the efficacy of such an approach to guide individuals within the framework and dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises to deepen their spiritual practice and their relationship with the Divine.

7. **Brief summary of the procedures, tests, or activities to be utilized during the course of the research in order to collect data.** The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises are a handbook for prayer developed by Ignatius of Loyola based on his own spiritual experience and his Sixteenth Century theology and masculine world-view. The manual provides notes for spiritual directors to guide people through an intentional series of prayer exercises based on the life of Jesus over an extended retreat period. Ignatius allowed for flexibility in how the retreat is offered including: a 1-month one-on-one intensive retreat, an approximately 9-month one-on-one retreat in daily living, or a 9-month spiritual direction group retreat. The hope is that after making Spiritual Exercises the retreatant would have a deeper and more loving relationship with God so that they are inspired to embody that love for others in the world.

    During the retreat, the director offers each retreatant the daily prayer exercises they are to use and meets with a retreatant regularly for spiritual direction sessions. In those sessions the fruits of their prayer are discussed and both director and retreatant listen together for how the Spirit is working in them through the Spiritual Exercises and their lives. During these sessions, the director also listens for how the retreatant is expressing the emotional

and spiritual signposts Ignatius suggested and discerns what exercises to offer next to help the retreatant progress through the dynamics of the Exercises.

My intent is to direct a minimum of 2 volunteers through the Spiritual Exercises retreat as adapted using a contemporary eco-feminist lens. Depending on the preference of the participants, their retreat may be completed using either one-on-one spiritual direction (for one month or approximately 9 months) or group spiritual direction (9 months). The retreat will take place on Zoom, or possibly phone sessions if needed for one-on-one retreatants. Nine-month retreatants will meet with me every 1-2 weeks. One-month retreatants will meet with me daily. For each session, I will keep field notes of the retreatants' experiences with the exercises given, including which exercises resonated most with them and which did not.

8. **Describe the population(s) from which participants will be recruited, plans for the recruitment, and the consent procedures to be followed.** Participants will be recruited from my own acquaintances who: 1) self-identify as coming from a progressive Protestant religious tradition, and 2) have at least some experience with spiritual direction and may be spiritual directors themselves. They will be offered this Ignatian retreat at no cost as part of my research study. I will have an initial meeting with each participant to explain the project, what to expect and to allow them to ask questions. Each will be asked to sign the IRB consent form (see attached). When they complete their retreat they will be asked to fill out a questionnaire to evaluate their experience of the retreat including their experience with individual exercises or types of exercises and how they feel the experience has changed them and their relationship with God.

9. **Summary of any <u>risks</u> of the topic, method, or to the population involved in the research plan.** Spiritual direction invites the directee making the retreat to connect to their deepest feelings, memories, and experiences. As these emotions and memories surface, the directee/retreatant may experience feelings of discomfort or may become emotionally overwhelmed if spiritual or emotional wounds re-surface. As an experienced and certified spiritual director with specific training in offering the Spiritual Exercises, I have the capacity to help retreatants work through these experiences and emotionally regulate as needed. Retreatants will be invited to step away from the retreat at any point they feel necessary. At our initial meeting I will collect contact information to check on them and an emergency contact. I also will have a list of clergy, spiritual directors and therapists who have agreed to be contacted by participants should it become necessary. Group retreatants will also be invited to meet with me individually if needed.

10.

a. **Describe how participants' privacy and dignity will be protected.**
Describe the procedures to assure confidentiality in the use, storage, and disposal of primary data. Spiritual direction is already a confidential relationship. Pseudonyms will be used for all directees on all material whether on paper or on the computer. Field notes after sessions will be input directly into my password protected laptop which is backed up regularly. No hard copies of any notes will be kept. All files on the computer, including

field notes, questionnaire responses, and backups, will be destroyed upon project acceptance.

b. **Indicate how long data will be maintained, where it will be kept, how it will be protected, and how it will be destroyed**. Field notes, questionnaire responses and contact information will be kept in a password protected computer file accessible only by me. All files will be kept only until project acceptance.

11. **Include a copy of Informed Consent Form to be used**. See attached.

12. Include the faculty advisor's endorsement of the research design.

Claremont School of Theology
Letter of Informed Consent
for Participants Able to Give Legal Consent

Consent to Participate in Research

Identification of Investigator and Purpose of Study

You are invited to participate in a research study, entitled "God in All Things: An Eco-Feminist Approach to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises" The study is being conducted by Christine Ng under the supervision of Dr. Frank Rogers of Claremont School of Theology, 1325 N. College Ave; Claremont, CA 91711, frogers@cst.edu, 951-415-5021. The purpose of this research study is to examine whether the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises can be adapted using an eco-feminist lens. Your participation in the study will contribute to a better understanding of how the Spiritual Exercises, as adapted, work in actual Ignatian retreat. You are free to contact the investigator using the information below to discuss the study.

Rev. Christine Ng
P.O. Box 951
Abiquiu, NM 87510
Cell: 305-522-6252
Email: christine.ng@cst.edu

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

If you agree to participate:

- The study retreat will consist of approximately [depending on the participant's choice 1-month of daily spiritual direction sessions, 9-months of weekly or bi-weekly spiritual direction sessions]. At the end of your retreat, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire to help the investigator evaluate the efficacy of the retreat for you.
- Your participation is intended help the investigator determine whether the Spiritual Exercises as adapted are effective in an Ignatian retreat.
- Your participation will consist in faithfully praying with the daily Spiritual Exercises provided by the investigator and meeting with the investigator as spiritual director during the course of your retreat.
- You will not be compensated.

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into practical theology, pastoral care and/or spiritual care. Participation in this study should not be regarded as—or substituted for—therapy by a licensed professional.

Risks and Confidentiality of Data

Spiritual direction invites the you to connect to your deepest feelings, memories, and experiences. As these emotions and memories surface, you may experience feelings of discomfort, sadness, or embarrassment. If these emotions become overwhelming, you are welcome to contact the investigator or to step away from the study or retreat as necessary to tend to your own spiritual or emotional well-being. There will be no costs for participating. Your name, email address and other personally identifiable information will be kept only during the data collection phase. No personally identifiable information will be publicly released. Your personal

information, if collected, will be used solely for tracking purposes. The investigator only will have access to the data during data collection.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Your information will be stored the final project has been accepted and then destroyed. You will provided with a copy of the final project including study results when it is published.

Participation or Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with Claremont School of Theology in any way. If you do not want to participate, you may simply stop participating.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the study or need to update your email address contact the primary investigator Rev, Christine Ng, 305-522-6252 or send an email to Christine.ng@cst.edu or contact the advisor Dr. Frank Rogers at 951-415-5021 or email to frogers@cst.edu**.** This study has been reviewed by Claremont School of Theology Institutional Review Board and the study number is **[STUDY NUMBER, the chair of the IRB will supply this number to the researcher]**.

Questions about your rights as a research participant.
If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the chair of the Institutional Review Board by email at irb@cst.edu.

Thank you.

- **SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

I have read the information provided above. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Participant *Date*

_____
Address

_____

_____
Phone *Email*

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator *Date (same as participant's)*

A copy of this document will be supplied for your records.

Claremont School of Theology
Permission to Obtain Personal Information

Participant's Name:

Date of Birth:

I hereby authorize Rev. Christine Ng to obtain from the following

Name:

Address:

The following information from the records pertaining to services received during spiritual direction services

Name, Email Address, Phone Number
Emergency Contact Name, Phone Number

Date of Service: 2023-2024

The records are required for the specific purpose of scheduling and tracking spiritual direction sessions and providing additional support as needed.

I understand that my authorization will remain effective from the date of my signature until, and that the information will be handled confidentially in compliance with all applicable federal laws.

I understand that I may see the information that is to be sent, and that I may revoke the authorization at any time by written, dated communication. I have read and understand the nature of this release.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant/Participant's Designated Representative Date

_____ Witness

_____ Date

Claremont School of Theology
Faculty Endorsement for Student Research

1. I, Frank Rogers, have reviewed the research proposal "God in All Things: An Eco-Feminist Approach to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises" of Christine Ng and I have agreed to supervise this student research as a part of his or her research toward the following degree.

___ Ph.D.
__x_ D.Min.
___ M.Div.
___ M.A.
___ Other (please specify) ____

I believe that the proposed project is consistent with customary academic research and that the project follows a research protocol that provides adequate protections for the human research participants.

Dr. Frank Rogers

Dr. Frank Rogers has reviewed and approved this proposed project.

_____
Faculty Signature

10-28-22

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Date

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